



# “In My Shoes”

**A South Carolina Adult Education Writing Project  
Volume I**

South Carolina Department of Education  
Office of Adult Education  
1429 Senate Street  
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***The Adult Education Writing Project  
“In My Shoes” Volume I  
is dedicated to 2014 Retiring Directors  
Mr. Richard Gaines and Dr. Virginia Simmons***

**Mr. Richard Gaines  
Anderson 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

Richard Gaines has been the Director at Anderson 3, 4, 5 Adult Education Center for seven years. In 2008 he was named the SC Adult Education “Rookie” Director of the Year and in 2012 named the SC Adult Education Director of the Year. He has been a member of the South Carolina Association of Adult Education Directors (SCAAED) Board since 2011.

After retirement in June, Mr. Gaines plans to spend quality time with family and friends, improve his golf game and travel the U.S. with his wife. He also hopes to find ways to continue to be an ambassador for the adult learners in our state.

**Dr. Virginia Simmons  
Horry Adult Education**

Ginny Simmons has been the Adult Education Director for Horry County Schools since March 19, 2007. She was named “Rookie” Director of the year. She led her staff in numerous initiatives and always gives them full credit for the program’s accomplishments. She is credited with consolidating and refining the Horry Adult Education program to offer a higher quality of service.

Ginny led her staff in organizing a data team and a marketing team. The marketing team created the now infamous Ed the Turtle! The Ed the Turtle logo is synonymous with adult education in Horry County. Under her leadership, Horry Adult Education promoted the use of the adult education data system, LACES, by teachers; moved the program into using computerized GED and expanded the use to two sites; met the goal of being paperless by 2014 and continues to put emphasis on integrating technology into the classroom. Ginny facilitated the RAETAC IV center and created the Technology Literacy Conference, known as TLC at the Beach, which has been held for four consecutive years.

After retirement, Ginny plans to love, play and learn from her four grandchildren. She wants to go to another country to live and teach English. She doesn’t know which country at this point but will take a grandchild each time she goes. Ginny plans to continue her internet business ([www.ginnyscloset.com](http://www.ginnyscloset.com)) and real estate work with Dockside Realty in addition to her involvement with the 501C3 organization ([www.rwvf.net](http://www.rwvf.net)), that she helped create in 1993. She plans to sell her house, downsize and discover something challenging and exciting in the world.

*“We wanderers, ever seeking the  
lonelier way, begin no day where we  
have ended another, and no sunrise finds  
us where left by sunset. Even while the  
earth sleeps we travel. We are the seeds  
of that tenacious plant, and it is in our  
ripeness and our fullness of heart that  
we are given to the wind to be  
scattered.”*

**Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet***

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# Foreword

As a society, we are organized to compel our citizens to complete milestones in a particular order and within certain time frames. We freely acknowledge the growing complexity within our society with the emergence of each new generation. Individualism and choice are not only valued, but demanded. Yet, we often ignore the growing numbers of individuals who are unable and/or unwilling to adhere to the portions of our timeline that are driven by antiquated and increasingly irrelevant social mores.

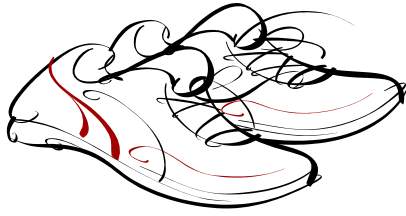
Adult students are perhaps the most complex clientele in public education. Their journey to our doors may have begun yesterday or seventy years ago. They are no longer in the purgatory of adolescence and simply at a check off point on the life continuum. They have families, responsibilities, and getting a high school credential is a high stakes, life changing event. They are motivated by the desire for job advancement, career change, setting an example for children or grandchildren, current or imminent crisis, etc. Their stories are unique and reflect what awaits students in the real world – their existence beyond the cocoon of the K-12 environment. It is perhaps difficult for those of us who passed through the expected checkpoints without incident or delay to understand the reasons others may not.

Adult education students from across South Carolina have generously agreed to share their journeys to adult education. It is an exceptional opportunity to gain knowledge, perspective, and appreciation for the complexities of life and individual situations that impact what many of us consider a simple checkpoint on a timeline. This collection is of particular value, as an inspiration to those students currently in the K-12 system, who have not grasped the significance of attaining a high school credential. It will inform regarding the types of supports and flexibility needed in our schools.

This offering honors and celebrates those who have traveled an alternate path, persevered, and demonstrated the courage to forge a new timeline. We hope you will accept this invitation and savor these stories from our students. On their behalf I say to you *If you want to understand my perspective, take a journey 'In My Shoes'.*

**Dr. Kathie Greer, Director**  
**Lexington/Richland 5, Adult Education**

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# ”In My Shoes”

## South Carolina’s Adult Education Writing Project

Adult education students were invited to participate in the first Adult Education Writing Project in celebration of National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. Adult Education and Family Literacy Week is a week designated to:

- Raise public awareness of adult education and family literacy
- Showcase adult education services and benefits
- Show local administration (superintendents, school boards) value added
- Facilitate and support increased access to adult education and family literacy programs

The writing project allowed students to use both developing writing and computer skills. Participation in the project gave students a chance for practical application of their writing skills, while allowing them to share their personal stories. The new GED test incorporates considerably more writing and technological skills, so in that light it was proposed that students not only write but write with a purpose. Writing Project Goals:

- Allow students to write about personal experiences
- Use technology
- Create an awareness of the perspective of others
- Expose students to diverse thinking and views
- Learn about shared experiences
- Learn how others have responded to challenges
- See their work published

Students were invited to write about their journey to, in, and after adult education. Their inspiring stories will enable program leaders to address even more of the challenges and barriers of attending adult education and provide direction for program improvement. With each phase of the Adult Education Writing Project practitioners were encouraged to embrace teachable moments that could strengthen skills which will lead to credentialing and adult literacy goals.

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*South Carolina's adult education programs strive to provide a high level of literacy services that enable our students to access needed information, take independent action, express ideas and opinions, keep up with the changing world, and exercise rights and responsibilities as family members, workers, and community members. As you may see from the quality of the writings in this publication, South Carolina's adult education students are able to express their feelings in a way that only they can.*

*The heart-touching stories you will read will be unforgettable. Enjoy your journey into the lives of our students. You will not regret the trip.*

**Dr. David Stout, Director Office of Adult Education**

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# Table of Contents

## **Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

Brenda Bobo.....	1
Robert Dutton, Jr. ....	2
Shala Geter .....	4
Alpine Hunt.....	7
Karen Lee.....	8
Emma Mance .....	9
Judith Mattison .....	10

## **Colleton County Adult Education**

Jacqueline Jackson .....	14
Kevin Chapin .....	16
Lanell Johnson .....	17
Tevin White.....	18

## **Fairfield County Adult Education**

Anonymous.....	20
Anonymous.....	22
Aaron Johnson .....	24
Christopher Mattox .....	26
Frances Pantoja .....	28
George Sampson .....	29

## **Greenwood County Adult Education**

Eddie Freeman .....	31
Latifah McGowan.....	32
Curtis Richardson .....	33
Tequila Zimmerman.....	34

## **Horry County Adult Education**

Jose David Campos .....	36
Tierra Gowins .....	40
Julie Moreno.....	42
Vicky Nixon.....	46

---



**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

Tauvarus Brown .....	48
Merilayne Feliz .....	49
Shakeemiah Frost .....	50
Roger Greene.....	51
Monique James .....	52
Charles King.....	53
Norma Lopez-Garcia .....	54
Tyesha Monroe.....	55
Whitley Monroe.....	56
Edilma Morales.....	57
Dulce Nava .....	58
Terrance Simmons .....	59
Maria Zarate .....	60

**Lexington/Richland District 5 Adult Education**

Farrah Cole.....	62
Donald Hazelett.....	65
Jessica Lux.....	66
Monica Martin.....	68
Rylei Thomas.....	70

**Marlboro County Adult Education**

Antoinette Arnold.....	73
Megan Gray.....	74
Kimberly Hernandez .....	75
Kiyanna McKeever .....	76
Bernard Palmer .....	77

**Palmetto Unified School District**

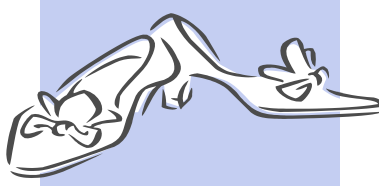
Sandtonyo Barber.....	80
Tyrone Bellamy.....	82
Winfred Blackwell, Sr.....	84
Caesar Covington .....	86
Claude Crump .....	90
Johnny Davis .....	94
Danny Gauldin.....	95
John Granados .....	96
Julius Gurley.....	98

---

Michael Hobby .....	100
Jay Hodge .....	102
Dominic Leggette.....	104
Michael Lesene .....	106
Johnny Mahaffey .....	107
Christopher Morris .....	108
Irshad Muhammad.....	110
Cornell Simpson .....	112
Lakeashia Simpson .....	114
Ernest Small .....	116
Tyrone Tisdale.....	118
Tobias Turner .....	120
Jeff Walker.....	121
Maurice Williams .....	122
 <b>Pickens County Adult Education</b>	
Susan Chapman.....	124
Marie Gabriel.....	126
Hannah Johnson .....	128
Kim Littles.....	129
George Medlin .....	130
John Pilgrim.....	132
Ashley Rose .....	134
Maria Sanchez.....	136
 <b>Reflections – Office of Adult Education Staff .....</b>	<b>142</b>
 <b>Adult Education Program Directory .....</b>	<b>144</b>

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## **In My Shoes**



Being in my shoes hasn't been easy. As a child growing up, I experienced a lot of pain. I lost my mother to cancer and I also lost my sister to cancer. That left my father raising my siblings and me. When I had girl problems I had to go to my sister because dad just didn't understand. As I grew older I ended up having sex at an early age and got pregnant. Instead of having an abortion, I produced a son. In my shoes hasn't been easy, but I have no excuses.

Then after I had my son, I dropped out of high school. I know if my mother had been living she would have made me stay in school, but here I am trying to go higher in my education. Now I trust God who is my heavenly father because through Christ Jesus all things are possible. He gives me strength day by day to walk and live in my shoes.

In life we make choices and whether they are good or bad, there are consequences. Some women never find their reason for living until their later years. I'm one of those women that opened my eyes to life at an older age. In my shoes I was a bitter woman. In fact, I said I wanted to die because I thought the pain would never disappear. I went out full of bitterness and the Lord brought me home again empty.

In my shoes I had to rediscover my purpose and recycle my life. I planted the seed of faith in my children for future generations. We have the right to be blessed. I'm going forward in life. I'm only limited by my own creativity and concentration. I made up my mind to challenge life. If I have to study hard, lose sleep and lose one of my jobs to get my education, so be it. In my shoes I once was lost but now I have found myself. I will become a proud, great nurse one day.

**Brenda Bobo**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

When I started the 8th grade, my life at home was not a regular life for an 8th grader. When I got out of school I went home and got with my buddy. Then we went out to get high-stoned because that was how it was in those days.

The 8th grade was over, and I passed to the 9th. I do not know how because most of the time my friend and I were getting high and laying out of school. That summer things got a little crazy.

Around my house my mother was working her tail off. My brother and sisters were doing their own stuff. Dad was nowhere to be found after the divorce when I was two years old, but Mother and Father had their own problems.

After summer was over I went to school in the 9th grade. I was there for about four hours then left class. I went home and called my brother-in-law and went to work for him installing carpet. I worked for him a few years.

Around 1985, my dad had a heart attack. He was living in Augusta, Georgia, at the time so I went down to take care of him. When he was better I took a job at an electrical warehouse driving a truck.

In five years the warehouse went bankrupt, and I came back to Anderson. I went to work at Honda working on cars and was there about a year and a half. I took a few weeks off to move my dad up to Anderson. Then I went to work in security and made lieutenant after two months.

I found out that the job was not what I wanted. I called my brother-in-law at Century Ford in Anderson. I was hired as a lube tech in 1995 and worked for about a year and was promoted to a used car tech. In the seventeen years I was at Century Ford the company changed owners four times. The last owners changed my job to parts department. I started driving the delivery truck for the next three years. Then on April 5, 2013, I was laid off.



I found out it is really hard to get a good job without a GED so I went to the Adult Education School. Now I am studying for my GED and I like coming to class. It is fun.

After I finish I plan on finding a good job that will give me good pay and a retirement plan so one day I can retire and relax with my wife and grandchildren.

It was not easy being the baby of the family in my shoes.

**Robert Dutton, Jr.**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

I, Shala Geter, have been living my life without a high school education for some time now. In the beginning it was easy because I was able to find a job just about anywhere. Now that it is 2013, and my kids are half-way grown, there is a demand for more money and education.

Now I'm making time for me to go back to school and get my education so I can do better in life. Working a job that only pays minimum wage, raising two



kids and holding down a household can be tough.

I have been going to church for some time now, and I've learned that in order to do better you have to know better.

It is sad enough to know there are many people in this world without a high school education trying to work and take care of their families.

The economy changes from day to day making things difficult. The only thing we can do is go back to school and try to educate ourselves. "Mrs. Jimmie" is my classroom instructor. I am so very thankful for her because she is working hard to make sure we all can pass our GED test sometime in the near future.

**Shala Geter**  
**Anderson District 3,4, 5 Adult Education**

*As education requires no age limits,  
so it is with dreams and visions.*

**Maurice Williams, Palmetto Unified School District**

*The only one who's keeping our purpose  
from out-weighting our trials is us. We  
see problems with the way companies  
place stipulations on job applications for  
hiring, yet we fail to even attempt to  
reach those goals needed for success.  
How we see ourselves is how others  
accept us in life.*

**Maurice Williams, Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes**

Writing "In My Shoes" was a journey looking back over my life with school, work and family. Through this journey, leaving school was my first mistake. Being in the 12th grade and walking out because I needed two points, what a joke. I thought at that time I was doing the right thing.

My journey was hard. I was missing something in life. Reading was my best subject. I needed to go back and finish what I started a long time ago. Good jobs require a high school diploma or GED, something I did not have. I wanted to better myself so I decided to go back to school.

I am so grateful for Anderson Interfaith Ministries and Anderson Adult Education. The teachers go out of their way to help us to get our GED. They will call when we are absent. They show us that they're very concerned about us going forward.



My journey is still hard but Anderson Interfaith Ministries has helped me in so many ways by giving out gas vouchers to help me get to school and helping me to be more responsible and on time. Going through this journey with the help of AIM I have faith that I will get my GED. Then I will follow with some kind of career school. I am looking forward to finding a good job.

I would just like to thank AIM and Anderson Adult Education for all they're doing to help me on this journey to be responsible, to have faith and to believe in myself.

**Alpine Hunt**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

In my shoes I have walked in the doors of Adult Education many, many times before. I know I have tried it over ten times. It was hard. I did not know what was going on. It has been many, many years since I dropped out of school.

I didn't understand what the teachers were talking about. I thought that I was stupid or slow or something. At first it was the money I did not have, or the clothes to wear, or babysitters needed at the time which kept me away. My kids are grown now.

I don't go to Adult Education anymore. Well I do, but it's in a different place. I like the Anderson Interfaith Ministries class better. I really want my GED. It's something I want since I dropped out of school. It's been on my mind to go back to school. I get tired of asking people how to spell words.



I hope I get my GED this time. It has not been easy. I'm here every day. I still don't understand everything that's going on. We have a good teacher and she will take time to help me.

When I get my GED that will be one of the happiest days of my life. I'll be looking for a job. Any job will be better than the one I have. With a GED I hope to find a job with better pay. I might go to college. You never know what will happen.

**Karen Lee**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

This is what it is like to be in my shoes. I get up on a Sunday morning praying and thanking the Lord for all that he has done for me. I get ready for church, wake my children and fix breakfast. No one knows what it is like to walk in my shoes. I've had lots of good times with my family and friends. I love going and checking on the sick and doing my housework.

I wish that when I was younger I had paid more attention in school. One day I decided to really look at my life. I needed to change, so I decided that I needed to go back to school and do something with my life. Now education is very important to me. It will help me get a good job in the future.

My sister would be very proud of me coming to school each day. That helps me to do better every day that I'm here. My teacher helps me when I need help. I have made new friends in my classroom.

In the next ten years I see myself with a good job and a new car, having gotten my GED and having lost weight. But I will still be the only one to know what it is like "in my shoes."

**Emma Mance**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**



## In My Shoes

Do you know what it feels like to lose a job? I lost my job and became unemployed. I went to the unemployment office to look for another job and sign up for my money. They asked me if I was interested in going back to school. I said yes because when you have to do a job search and all the jobs out there paying what you are used to require a GED or Work Keys Certificate, that hurts. Nowadays you have to know something about technology. I went back to school and I am really enjoying it. I am so proud of myself. I have moved up a level. I am learning to type on the computer and that is a challenge. I am hoping that I will be able to get my GED and a job soon.

I was very young when I went to work and took it upon myself to quit school. That was the biggest mistake of my life. I was seventeen when I became a mother. Back in the eighties it was not hard to get a job. Word of mouth could land most anybody a job. Having become a young mother I felt like I had to work because I had my own responsibility. I said to myself, "I am a mother, and I don't want my child to struggle like I did." So I



worked hard. With the help of the Lord on my side I managed to give my child her father's last name.

I have had two very good jobs without a GED. When I lost my last job by getting laid off, little did I know a whole lot of things had gone to technology. You have to know something about using a computer. I did not, so I was asked if I wanted to go back to school and work on my GED. Of course I said yes. In this day and time we need to at least have a Work Keys Certificate or GED to get a job. I thank God for technology. Skilled teachers here at Anderson District 5 Adult Education and Anderson Interfaith Ministries are helping me a lot. I would tell any young person today to stay in school and be all that you can. Please do something with your life.

In this day and time you can't be too educated because the more you know the better. As I progress in school, every day I face challenges that my teacher and I will work on together. I would love to become a nurse someday. It's a field that always needs help. I thank God for the staff here at Anderson Interfaith Ministries. They are all helpful in every way. You can go to any of the team and they will point you where you need to go. They are all an awesome team of helpers. You can feel the love and care from everyone here. "Mrs. Jimmie" is new on the team but she is very helpful, loving and patient with all of us.

My daughter always told me she was going to do something with her life and she did. She graduated from high school and got her nurse's degree to work in a medical office. Then her Savior came for her at an early age, twenty-six years old. She had dedicated her life to the Lord. So much work in so little time. She made me proud to be her mother!

My plan for the future is to achieve my GED soon and become a nurse. I like that feeling because I care a lot about people and it shows. I have people say to me that I should become a nurse. Maybe through the eyes of others, they see my blessing that God has for me.



**Judith Mattison**  
**Anderson District 3, 4, 5 Adult Education**

*My adult educational journey was a  
rough and rugged road, like travelling  
across the hot burning sands without a  
camel or water.*

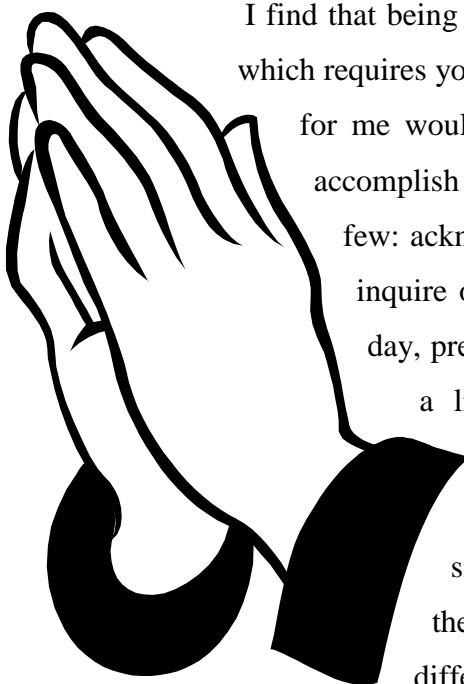
**Michael Lesene, Palmetto Unified School District**

*In spite of what I was not able to  
accomplish in my past, it does not mean  
a stumbling block cannot be made a  
stepping stone.*

**Maurice Williams, Palmetto Unified School District**

## In My Shoes

Journeying through life as an adult without education can be difficult at times. Being a single parent can be a challenge. There are times life will take you in areas that will require the basis of education, if not a more advanced education, to support or serve both family and community.



I find that being a single mother is definitely a job in its self, which requires you to be vigilant at all times. To describe a day for me would begin with rising really early in order to accomplish some, if not all, of my daily tasks. To list a few: acknowledging God, praying for others, read and inquire of him for guidance and instructions for that day, prepare breakfast and some prep for dinner, and a little house cleaning along the way. Then prepare myself for the day. However my day ends is totally up to God. No matter the situation or challenges I must face, knowing there are benefits to it all makes a world of difference.

Since I've embarked on being a better individual I'm discovering that family plays an essential part. Without the prayers, love and support of them it would be very difficult to survive on this educational journey.

The community as a whole has great demands and requirements as well. I've learned that without the assistance of people with compassion, love, experience, and knowledge this would be difficult. However, without such people as Ms. Adams, Ms. West and the entire staff at Colleton County Adult Education Center, life for me would probably have very little meaning. They play a great part of me being an educated individual. The enhancement I've since received will assist me to better serve in my community and support my family.



Journeying through life without my family, friends and education is definitely a challenge. However, I consider myself truly blessed having received a wonderful group of people that God placed in my life at such a time that means and made a world of difference in my becoming the educated individual that I am today. My goal is to receive my GED in October 2013 and I will



continue to be active in my community, giving back even more of what's being provided for me. Additionally, I give all glory and honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for without him I won't be able to do anything. But with Him ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

**Jacqueline Jackson**  
**Colleton County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

Being in my shoes is very tough. In this year alone I lost my job and my oldest brother. I lost my job in January and I lost my brother in April. I worked at Walterboro Veneer Plant for eight years. I have been blessed to have known my brother Steven T. Donaldson for forty-five years.

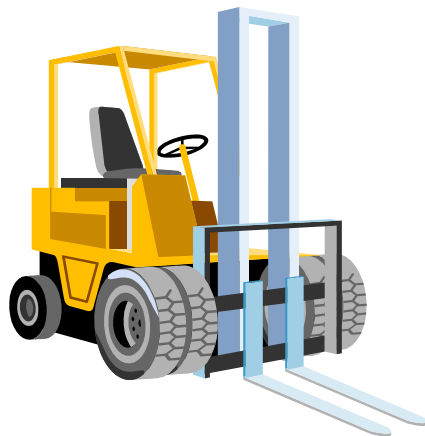
I started working at Walterboro Veneer Plant on February 3, 2005. I started working as a Security Officer. My shift was eight to four. My job was to make sure that everyone on the property was an employee or contractor. The most important job was to make sure the property was secure.

I was one day making my rounds on the property making sure the property was secure when I was asked if I wanted to work inside the plant to make extra hours. Mr. Anderson, the owner of the mill, stated that they needed help inside the mill. My job inside the mill was to operate the forklift and stack wood.

I lost my oldest brother in a car accident in April of 2013. Steven was a special brother who always smiling. He was preaching and singing. He was a caring and loving person. He was someone that you could depend on.

In my shoes I have learned to always take one day at a time. I have also learned to accept the things that I control. I have also learned to love one another. I will truly miss my brother STEVEN and the mill, but I will pray that there are better days ahead.

**Kevin Chapin**  
**Colleton County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

My dream was to come back to school and get my high school diploma or GED, but I waited so long to achieve my dream.

I started coming to night school to get my high school diploma. All I needed was two credits and to pass my reading part of the exit exam. I found out I was pregnant so I had to stop coming to night school for a while until after I had my baby. I thought it would be easy to return back to school but it wasn't because I didn't have anyone to take care of my baby. So, I had to put school off for a while.

I started working to take care of my child. Money started looking good so I never decided to go back to school to finish with a family finance issue.

I got married and had two more children and had to continue to work even harder to take care of my family. I know it's time for my dream to come true to get my GED.



**Lanell Johnson**  
**Colleton County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

Being in my shoes is hard but I have my good days. One of the things that would be hard to be in my shoes is trying to get my GED before the year is over. There are some things I don't understand which takes time to learn but I don't have much time. Every day I have to study and wake up every morning to go to school and get forty hours to take my test.

Another hard part of being in my shoes, other than going to school, is trying to pay bills on a part-time job. It is hard to pay bills each month only getting \$7.25 an hour. When you don't have many hours, plus there are other needs that you need to do with your money like putting gas in the car and keeping your hair done or cut.

Another hard thing about being in my shoes is my asthma and my allergies. When the pollen is out they both act up, which causes me to sometimes get an asthma attack that I can't help but get. It sometimes makes my nose drain or causes me to cough which makes it very hard to enjoy my day or go to work or school.

And the last part about being in my shoes is not knowing if I will ever get over these things or finish these things I am going through and me being stressed and depressed about them. That makes my head hurt and not feel good. But I know one thing, the Lord will bring me through my bad days and He will make a way out of no way.

**Tevin White**  
**Colleton County Adult Education**



*“You don’t need a New Year to make a change; all you need is a Monday,” to begin to achieve your goals. I’m not saying it’s easy; I am saying it’s possible.*

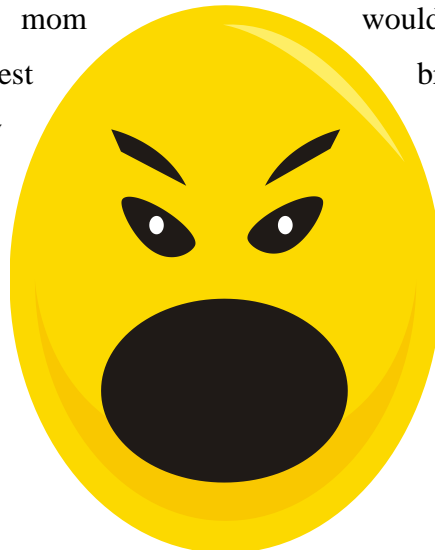
**Julie Moreno, Horry County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

In my shoes is a hard working young man, who will not quit or take no for an answer. My shoes have walked through some of the roughest roads, but I always make it to where I have to go. In my shoes is a man who has been through too much to be so young. My shoes may be old and run down, but with faith in God I will always make it through my situations. In my shoes is a man who will not take “No” for an answer. I am a man who will not be influenced by the people around me. In my shoes is a young man, who always tries his best to be successful.

In my shoes is a man, who has had no one there for me in my life. My dad was gone when I was four; my mom never really cared about what was going on in my life. All she cared about was how she was going to get through the day. There would be days when my two brothers and I would have to sleep outside because my mom would lock the door when she is about to go out and get drunk. Then when she does get back from doing whatever she was doing, she would be drunk. We would have to get her in the house. There would be days when I would be hungry and have to call my aunt to bring us something to eat.

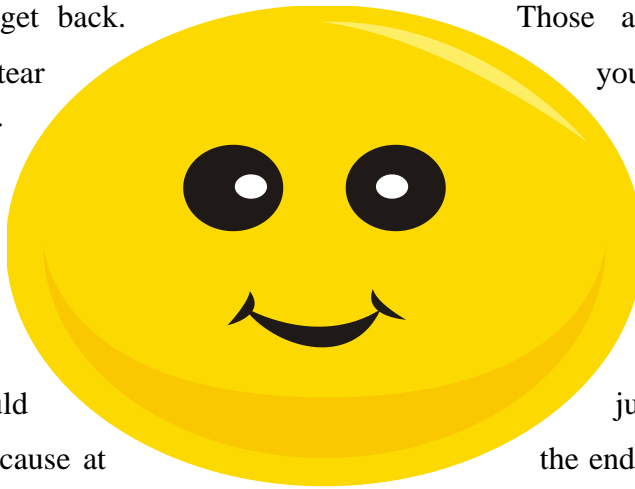
In my shoes is a man who will not stop trying to be the best I can be. Sometimes when my mom would get drunk she would always say that my oldest brother and I were going to be just like my father. I realized as long as she kept saying that it made me want to be something more than just another statistic of a black father. I promised myself that if I ever have kids, I would not make them go through the same thing I went through.



In my shoes is a young man who will make something out of myself and not be another statistic. Life never gets easier it only gets tougher every day you wake up. But I have also learned and will continue to learn from my mistakes and try not to let them happen again. I was treated badly as a child, but I think that is why I'm the person I am today.

A lot of people need to know that the people you hang around can be a big downfall in your life because those people can take away a lot of your time, time you can never get back.

Those are the people  
who are there to tear  
you a part with a  
smile on their  
face. You will  
always be there  
for them, but  
they are never  
around when  
you need them  
the most. A  
lot of people try  
to break me  
down, but I would  
just smile and



keep walking because at  
the end of the day that  
person would be going through something a lot bigger than my problems. I would  
tell them to walk a mile in my shoes, but I know they will be too big. Every day I  
wake, I remember what kind of home I have come from, think about where I want  
to go and what steps I will have to take today to get to where I need to be.

**Anonymous**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**

## **Walking in My Shoes Was a Long Journey**

Walking in my shoes was a long journey. I met my future ex-husband when I was a freshman in high school. I became pregnant my sophomore year of high school, when I was 15 years old, and my boyfriend was 18. We married in May of that year. I began my junior year of high school six months pregnant, married and very sick. I soon discovered that I physically wasn't able to continue with high school during my pregnancy. So I quit with the intention of returning after I had delivered my child.



In the following years, I had another child. After my second child was born my husband and I started growing apart. I believe that at the ages of 15 and 18, when we were married, we just hadn't grown into the people we were supposed to be yet. We tried for 12 years to make our marriage work for the sake of our children. But in the end, we decided that what was best for our children was to remain friends and live separately. So at the ages of 27 and 30 we divorced.

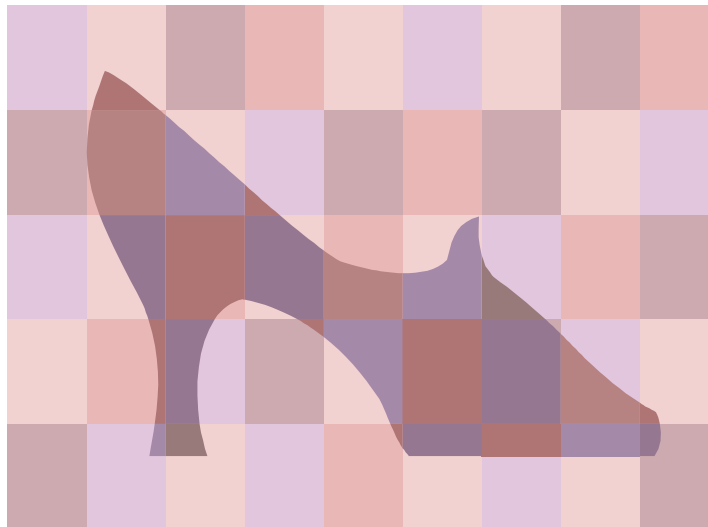
Becoming a single parent of 2, with only 2 years of a high school education was not easy — especially when it came to finding work. I was able to acquire a few different retail jobs that paid just barely above minimum wage to support myself and my 2 children. I was determined to support us without government assistance. I was able to for many years until my children's father decided that he no longer wanted to pay child support after he started another family with someone else and I was laid off from my barely above minimum wage job. I did have to accept food stamps and Medicaid for the last three years that my children were living at home while they finished their high school education. In which time I dropped those assistances.



I continued working dead-end, low paying jobs while helping my two beautiful, loving daughters grow into the well rounded adults that they are today. So now that job is complete it is now time for me, at the age of 43, to return to school and complete my high school education.

In conclusion, being a single parent without a high school diploma and no support from my ex-husband was a difficult time in my life. Now that I have completed one journey and am beginning the next, you can see why walking in my shoes has been a long journey and continues to be so.

**Anonymous**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes Could Be Difficult**

Walking a mile in my shoes could be very difficult sometimes. After losing my father at a very young age, I had to take on responsibility at a young age. I got married when I was eighteen years old.

On March 14, 1969, my dad was asked by his best friend to set up and play his Record Hop at a local night club. Today, we would call this set up a DJ. Around 3 o'clock that Saturday morning on March 15, 1969, my dad was accidentally shot and driven to a Columbia Area Hospital. He later died that same day. This was devastating for my siblings and me.



My brother and I were the eldest of the six children. This would mean we had to take on responsibility early on. I was ten years old and my mother was expecting another child. This child was born on June 10, 1969. It was now seven of us. This made it all about “survival.”

By the time I was eighteen years old, I got married, moved out of the house and started living on my own. I didn't think it was a bad thing at the time, but as I look back on it, my wife and I both were very young.

Now, I have named a few things as to what it would have been like walking in my shoes. As I said earlier, walking in my shoes could have been very difficult at times.

**Aaron Johnson**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**

*It feels good to look at my daughters and say, “Mommy is going to school today.”*

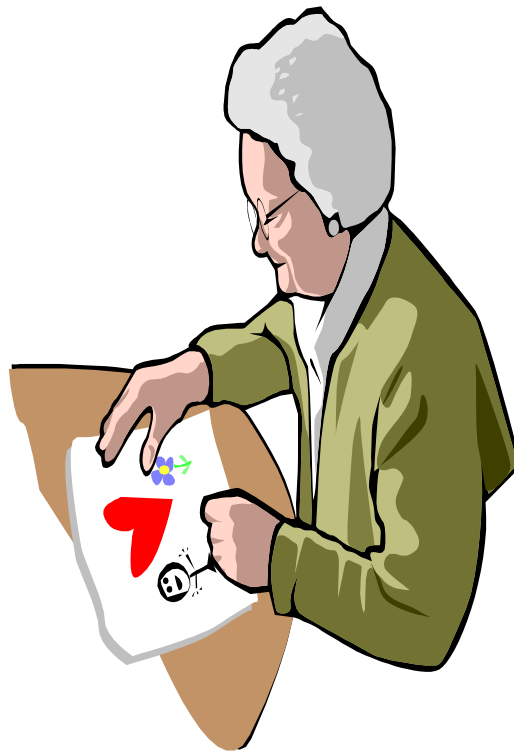
**Monique James, Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## Try to Understand Me

If you could walk a mile in my shoes, then you might begin to understand me. I have had a hard life. I have never laid eyes on my father, only in pictures. My mother was very young when she had me. My dad was too. My father died before I was born. He was sixteen. He died in a motorcycle accident back in 1996, the year I was born. My mother was fourteen. She did the best she could for herself and me. When I got a little bit older, around four or five, I stayed with my grandmother. By then, my mom had begun seeing a man who is now my brother's father. My grandma was mad at the fact she never came to see me and they got into a big argument. One night, my mom came and took me to live with them. It was "hell."

As I got older, my mom got married and had my little brother. My stepdad then was really mean to me. He started beating me when I was five or six. It went on until I got tired of it and sick of being stuck in my room all the time. One day he came to my room threatening me and I refused to let him hit me anymore. I grabbed a weapon and told him to stay away from me. It ended there.

Around that time I moved back in with my grandma. We had our ups and downs but she has always been there for me. When I began middle school I was living with her. That wasn't a good year for me. I got into so much trouble that year. Now I regret acting stupid in school. That year messed me all up. I don't know what got into me. Now I'm in Adult Education trying to get my GED.



I have a son. He is a year and five months old. I need a job to support him and his mom, but I'm having a hard time finding one. Some places I can't work because I'm not eighteen. It is very stressful on me because I feel like I'm not doing what I'm supposed to. I want to be to be a better father and boyfriend. I'm not the man I want to be, but I try to do better and I pray for patience every day.

If you could walk a mile in my shoes you could understand why I am this sad, stressed out, mean, looking person. I want to do better for my son. I don't want him going through what I did. If he ever has trouble with anything I'm going to be there for him -- no matter what.



**Christopher Mattox**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

Let me introduce myself so you'll know what it's like to walk in my Vince Camutos. My name is Frances, born in New Jersey to Mexican parents who, of course, migrated from Mexico. I am the youngest of four. My parents moved us to South Carolina in late September of '98.

I attended school here in the South. My first day of school was such a cultural shock. I was bullied! I was named "Chink," "Sand-Nigger," "Wetback," and my all-time favorite "Pocahontas." Being in New Jersey, I never had to deal with this. These were names that I never heard before until that first day of school. I dealt with this all throughout my school years.

Now, as an adult, I still endure racism. I get a lot of stupid comments here and there. I've been called "Yankee," since I have a northern accent. Honestly, what bothers me is I'm Mexican and I speak "perfect English," with a Yankee accent. Many people here in the South are shocked! As if, "Oh my, where did you learn to speak, so well?" As if, we're *Illiterate!* Sometimes when I think about it, I just hoped people weren't so closed-minded to *difference*.

Walking in my heels isn't easy since they are six inches high. What I'm trying to say is that this hasn't brought me down. Nor will I ever let life's manipulations torture my life. My life's trials and tribulations have made me who I am today, a mother of two Cherubs, Daughter of Seraphims, a wife of God's son, and a sister with unconditional love.

As I walk in my six inch Vince Camuto stilettos, I walk with pride and prosperity.

**Frances Pantoja**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**



## Walk a Mile in My Shoes



When I was a young boy growing up in school, I got so many awards in school. When I grew up, things changed in my life. I quit school and started doing drugs. I knew drugs were not good for me but I did them anyway. As I got older I married, had children and got divorced from my wife. The life was like “Walking a Mile in My Shoes.”

When I was a young boy in school, I got so many awards in school. Getting awards made me very happy. School was real important to me when I was in school. Learning was a great joy to me. The awards I got were “Good Attendance” and “Student of the Month.” Getting awards on something good is very rewarding. This is what things were like when I was young.

When I grew up, things changed in my life. I quit school and started doing drugs. Quitting school and doing drugs were not a good decision for me. Life problems sometimes make you do stupid things. I didn’t know that marijuana and drinking were not good for me when I was young. My life was like this, but I changed my life style.

When I got older I got married and had children. My children were a joy to me. After getting married and had children I was glad to be a dad. Children are a gift from GOD. I got divorced, but life didn’t stop me from being a father to my children. This is what my life was like being a good father.

My conclusion is the life I had, when I was on drugs, married, children, and divorced, changed my life for the better. Now! That’s like “Walking a Mile in My Shoes.”

**George Sampson**  
**Fairfield County Adult Education**

*The only thing that I have on my mind  
though is making my family proud and  
showing society that no, I'm not just a  
“high school dropout” or another  
statistic.*

**Megan Gray, Marlboro County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

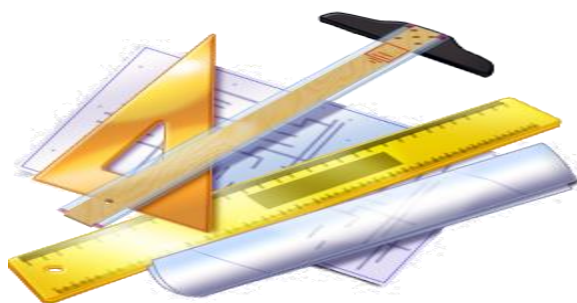
Walking in my shoes has been rough for me. I'm trying to figure out how to cope with life situations. Some of the things I have been wrestling with are my education, lifestyle and choices. Coming to adult education has changed my life. My experience has changed my life. My experience in the classes has helped my esteem a lot, making me want to plan for the future.

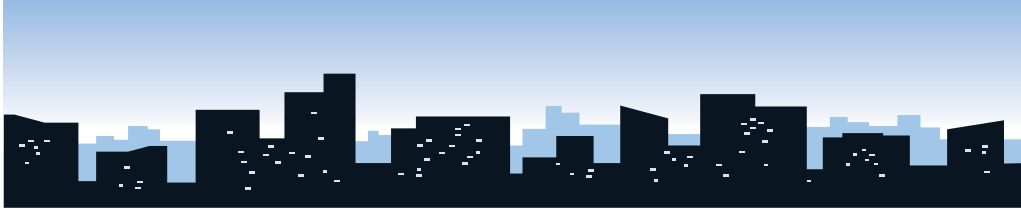
My journey to adult education started when I stopped going to school in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. At the age of 18 years old, I had my first child, so school was the last thing on my mind. I worked hard all the time at a very low rate of pay which made me feel like I get couldn't ahead in life. Sadly to say, I wanted to give up because it seemed as though I was stuck in a situation.

One day I had two blood clots that almost took my life. I knew then that something had to be done to improve my life. So, I began taking adult education classes which have been awesome. I enjoy having teachers that take their time to help me. The teachers took their time to learn about me as a person and boost my self-esteem. I also like having people around me wanting to succeed like I do which makes me feel comfortable.

My plan after adult education is to graduate. I feel this will show my children that they can do anything when you put your mind and heart into it. I hope to become a drafting engineer and one day have a design shop of my own to pass along to my children.

**Eddie Freeman**  
**Greenwood County Adult Education**





## **In My Shoes**

To walk in my shoes is not very easy. I am twenty-one years old. I also have a three year old daughter. I push myself so hard to be successful. Sometimes I find myself afraid, wondering if I will be successful. I feel like giving up on life sometimes because it can get too hard at times. But I remain strong for my child. It is not easy walking in my shoes but I always told myself a goal without a plan is just a wish.

As of this month of December 2013, I enrolled to get my GED. The reason is to find a good paying job to be able to take care of my child. Also, to show my child that I made it and to teach my child never to give up on your goals. To get my education is very important to me. I know it will take me where I want to be in life. And it will help make me smarter and able to teach my child.

After I receive my GED, my plans are to enroll at a technical college. I want to take up human services because I love working with people. I also will write a resume so I can apply for work at Eaton Corporation. I plan also to use my CNA certificate to find work. I would like to move to a new city to see if there are opportunities to make more money.

In about 2 years from now I see myself successful and a strong person. I will be in college working on the degrees I want to accomplish. I will also have a good paying job to support my child and meet her needs. I am going to be a hard working single mother. Whoever thought I would have made it to be a successful woman without giving up. No matter who or what was in my way, I made it to be successful.

**Latifah McGowan**  
**Greenwood County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

In my shoes, nobody can do the things I do. I really need my education so I can have a good job and become a business man. I need to help my family pay the bills, and I need to take care of my nephew. I need a job to do that.

My journey to Adult Education started when I was getting into fights at school every day. So I told the teacher, “They’re going to kick me out.” Then she said “You can go to Genesis for your education.” So I asked my little cousin if they have a program at Genesis. He said “Yeah.” A couple days later, I came and now I can start over and get my GED and find a good job in life.

When you go to Adult Ed you always have to be on time for school. That will show the teacher you really care about the program. Since I have been here, I am helping people with their work in class. I learned to read the hard way, but it’s getting better every day as I read in class. If you really want to be here, you have to be about your business – ain’t no time wasting here. You have to have respect for other people and the teachers.

When I get done with school, I want to go to the Army or Navy. If that doesn’t work, I’m going to college to see if I can get my own business for shoes and clothes. When I finish with everything I’m going back to Atlanta and start back over looking for jobs to help my family out and get on the right path to success.

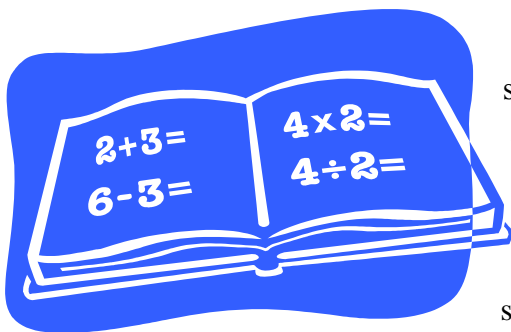
**Curtis Richardson**  
**Greenwood County Adult Education**



## In My Shoes

Walking in my shoes can be very stressful, but I am willing to make it through. Not knowing how to do school work with my kids can be hard. But I know there is a way to be better. So here is my journey back to Adult Ed, experience at school and success after school.

I'm coming back to adult education because I dropped out March of 2006 when I became pregnant with my daughter Ticheyia. She is 7 years old now. After 7 years of being out of school, I wanted to come back to be able to help her in school. The school work just looks so hard to me. I have to pay people to help her. So finally I said I must go back to school to be a better parent.



So far I'm enjoying the learning at school. It's making me feel good about myself. I'm enjoying meeting new people and learning new ways of math and reading. Math has always been a hard subject for me.

After I finish Adult education I want to go to school for nursing. I love helping people. By the year 2014 I hope to have my G.E.D. After that, college here I come! I want to soon be an RN.

Adult education is changing my life. Anyone should want to walk in my shoes. No matter how old you are never doubt yourself. This journey will be the best; getting my G.E.D. will be amazing.

**Tequila Zimmerman**  
**Greenwood County Adult Education**

*Each day, my steps repeat anew.*

**Johnny E. Mahaffey, Palmetto Unified School**

## In My Shoes

My true story began when I was six years old. I lived in a little town on Veracruz, Mexico, with my mother, sister, brother, and my maternal grandmother. My mother alone raised us with the few resources that she had. Our town is far from civilization so it is hard to find a job unless you have a large amount of land and can work it. My uncle Jesus, my mother's brother, helped us with money and food every other week. Still my mother struggled to provide food and clothes for us. So, when she had the opportunity to come to the United States in 1996, she made the decision to leave my family and I behind in order to give us a better life. It was really hard for me. She left my sister and my grandmother in charge of the family. My sister Rosario was ten years old at the time.

My brothers and I continued attending school, and shortly after, my mother started to send money and our lives began to change in a better way. We lived really close to our uncle Francisco. He had his own family and lots of land and gave me the opportunity to help him on the farm. Sometimes he paid me \$3.00 a day. He was like a father to me and taught me everything about working hard and saving money. Because I learned really fast, I started making extra money. So, by the time I was twelve, I started missing classes and school. This upset my sister. She got help from a teacher who came to my house and talked to me and my family, convincing me to stay in school and finish middle school.





When I finished middle school, my mother decided to send me to Nuevo Leon with my sister who was attending college at the University of Monte Morelos. She was able to help me with the transition to high school. As soon as I arrived I also got a job where I worked in the morning and attended high school in the afternoon. One problem though, was that I missed my mother more and more. All I wanted was to be with my mom. I was fifteen years old when my sister and Mother decided to send me to the U.S. I

remember that before I crossed the border, my sister trained me to walk and run long distances. She woke me at 5:00 a.m. every day for a month. We ran two miles a day so that when the day arrived I was prepared and ready for the trip.

When the day finally arrived, my sister took me to Guanajuato, Mexico, to meet the people (“coyotes”) who were supposed to help me on my journey. My sister cried all the way there. Then, the next day I met thirty more people and we took a flight to Nogales, Sonora. We spent a week waiting in a hotel. One evening they separated the men and women and sent the men to the bus which dropped us at the border. We started walking all night long, about ten hours, and arrived at a highway. We waited all day under the trees. Finally in the evening a car picked us up and took us to Arizona where we stayed for three days. Then, they took us to Las Vegas, Nevada, where they bought me a flight ticket to Raleigh, NC. I was so excited to see my mother after eight long years.



The first thing my mother did was enroll me in high school. In the beginning everything was difficult because I did not understand anything, but my cousin helped me a lot. Soon I started making friends and they also helped me with my classes. On weekends I started working with my cousin in his drywall company, and once again, I liked to make my own money. Then I started missing school. In 2006 when I dropped out of high school, I was making \$2,000 a week at seventeen years of age. A good reason, I thought, to choose a job over an education. I was hanging out with adults so I started drinking alcohol and spending money like crazy, making bad decisions.



My sister graduated from college in 2006 and moved to the U.S. I was so excited to see her. In 2007 she gave birth to my first nephew. Shortly after that my second nephew arrived. But I was still missing my grandmother and little brother who were still in Mexico. In 2008 the economy and the construction business went down. I wasn't working much and did not save much money so times were difficult for me. So I began to see the real value of money and hard work.

In 2009 I met my fiancé and she supported me through the tough times. When the economy started to pick back up in 2010, I took advantage of that and started working my own crew and followed by opening my own company. Since 2011, I have had my own painting and dry-wall company. I cannot complain about my life or my struggles. I think I am lucky because I am now living the American dream. People have said that does not exist but I think they are wrong. I worked hard and have an opportunity to show what I know and the skills I have acquired. I am still pursuing my GED through adult education so I have not given up trying.

**Jose David Campos**  
**Horry County Adult Education**



*I wear one hell of a pair of shoes. It's a pair that I wouldn't give anyone or wish on anyone.*

**Christopher Morris, Palmetto Unified School District**

## In My Shoes

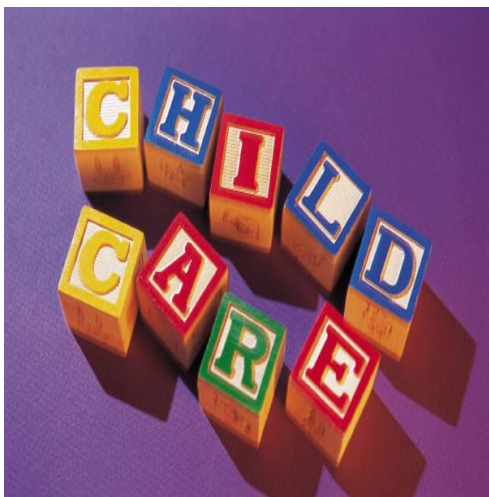
My Name is Tierra Gowins. I am a twenty-seven-year-old female. I am a single parent of four. I am currently attending Myrtle Beach Family Learning Center to better my life and the lives of my children.

I am glad I finally have the opportunity to attend these GED classes. I've been wanting to for a while now, but it was hard finding childcare. Now that I am closer to my family, childcare is not an issue.

I am working on earning my GED because I did not finish high school. I did not finish because growing up I did not realize the importance of education. I didn't have the inspirational guidance or anyone to talk to because my mother passed away when I was ten years old. When she passed, my father came into my life, but he didn't direct me the way I feel he could have. I don't blame my father because at the same time, I was a stubborn child. At age sixteen I got pregnant and dropped out of school. At age seventeen I had my first child. I was not interested in going back to school. I wanted to work to provide for my child, so I got a job and moved in with my boyfriend. A little while after I moved in with him, my father moved to South Carolina.



A few months passed and my child's father and I were not getting along. So eventually I moved out and went to stay in a shelter for single mothers. At this shelter they help you to try to better your life, so they put me back in school. Still at this time I didn't care for school. I just went because it was a requirement. A couple of months passed by and I didn't like living at the shelter with rules and curfew. I wanted to do what I wanted to do. Then I decided to leave the shelter and move to SC with my father.



When I moved back I got a job and was not thinking about going back to school. As years went on, I had three more children. Being a single mother was hard. I realized I needed more education and a high school diploma or GED to make my life better. There were many times I wanted to attend, but I didn't have child care. At one time I did enroll at the Conway Learning Center, but it didn't work out because of childcare, and I felt I could not make it work around my job schedule.

Now, I am finally at the point in my life where I am going to make it work. I am now attending MBFLC, working on earning my GED. So far, taking these classes I am learning a lot, my memory is being refreshed, and I know I am going to make it!

**Tierra Gowins**  
**Horry County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

My name is Julia. When I moved to the United States in 2002 I had no idea of how radically my life was about to change. Being in a foreign country, far away from my loved ones and not speaking the English language, didn't make for an easy transition. However, I managed to make my way in this country.

I had decided to come to America for one main reason; my husband (who was already here) and I thought it would be better for our daughter if we were all together. Originally, I had no plan to live here for more than two years. Obviously, God had a very different idea. I have now been living here for over eleven years.

At the beginning of my U.S. journey, my husband, daughter and I lived in the countryside in a small town called Loris. We stayed with an American couple. He barely spoke Spanish and his wife only spoke English. Therefore, my husband and daughter were the only two people with whom I could talk on a daily basis. Occasionally, when we went to the city, I was able to talk with my husband's Spanish speaking friends, which made me feel great!



Several months later, I became worried because my daughter — who was a little over three years old — had no friends with whom to play. So I enrolled her in a Head Start Program. My sole intention was for her to make some good friends. Although she did not speak English, which worried me more than anything, I hoped for the best.

As time passed, there were days when I had to go to my daughter's school meetings and speak with her teachers. As a parent who did not speak English, I had to bring someone with me to those appointments to translate. And on occasions, no one was available. Unable to speak English, being away from my family, and not knowing how to drive a car, I felt terribly frustrated and depressed.

One day, my husband's cousin told me about the Horry County Schools' ESL program in Socastee; I thought, "What a great idea! This is my opportunity to learn English." Then, a question popped into my head, "How am I going to get there?" I didn't know how to drive, nor did I even know where Socastee was!

Also, we had only one car that my husband used to go to work. The couple with whom we were living also had only an old, small, red car that we called "Pichirilo" (meaning small car; cars are often called that in parts of Latin America and we saw it as a funny and fitting name).

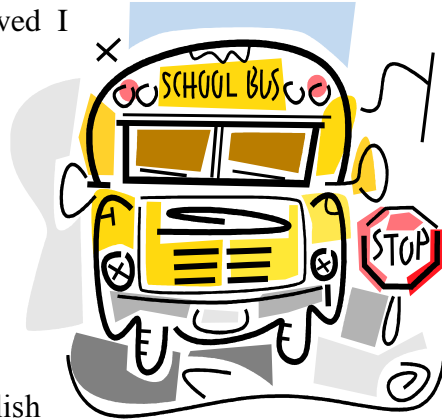
While I faced many obstacles, I was determined not to stay locked between those four walls of the country house. One Sunday I asked the American couple to loan me the pichirilo and little by little, I began to learn to drive. Every afternoon, or during any other opportunity I had to borrow the car, I would practice on the dirt roads of Loris, in the beginning with my husband and later by myself. One day, I ended up in a



ditch and scared because my daughter was in the car with me. I didn't know what to do! A good Samaritan was passing by and helped me. All he had to do was put the car in reverse — I felt so stupid! Afterwards, I drove back home and for a couple of weeks did not touch the pichirilo.

When I finally felt confident again, I asked for the car and kept practicing until one day I told my husband that I was going to drive to English classes. He responded, "No, you hardly know how to drive and have never been to the city by yourself." Well, he was not wrong, but I explained that I had to do it. I was the one who would go to our daughter's school and become frustrated because I didn't understand what the teachers were telling me. I told him that I must go and that is exactly what I did!

When the chosen Monday finally arrived I took my daughter to the bus stop and then returned home to get ready to go to school too. Very nervous and unsure of what I was doing, I turned on the car and started to drive. On the way I was not only thinking about the driving rules, but also of how I was going to tell the teacher, “I’m here to register for the English classes,” if the only English words I knew were “hello” and “thank you.”



After approximately forty-five minutes of driving, I reached my destination. I sat in the car in the parking lot for a while, gathered my courage, and then walked towards the building. What an awesome surprise I found there! The teacher spoke a little Spanish; what a relief! She greeted me, gave me some forms and helped me fill them out. I told her that I wanted to begin at Level One because I didn’t know any English at all. She said, “We will see,” and sent me to Level Two. For one week, I was completely lost and daily asked the teacher to be moved to Level One. She responded, “Stay in Level Two for another week and if you are convinced it is too difficult for you, we will put you back in Level One.”

Another week passed and I kept complaining. A friend whom I met during those two weeks told me, “Stay here. This level is better.” I said, “It may be better for you but not for me. It has been two weeks of frustration and headaches.” I then asked, “Are you going to sit by my side every day, so I can ask you what the teacher is saying?” He agreed and that is how I started to learn English.

In this way, for two years, I drove from Loris to Socastee, Monday through Thursday and began to master a new language. During my journey through those Socastee ESL classes, I made good friends and met teachers who went the extra mile to help and encourage not only me, but all students like me who struggled with learning the English language. Thanks to them, I am now able to write this essay and also thanks to them, many other students have found the support and push they needed in order to meet their personal goals.

The Horry County Schools' Adult Education teachers work hard every day by teaching English and giving us the necessary tools to help us meet our established goals — goals that sometimes we didn't even know we could achieve. For example, I never thought I could finish high school — much less, finish it in a language that was not my native one. But here I am, within months of graduation and very proud of what I have accomplished.

After I graduate from the Horry County Schools' Adult Education Program I would like to keep studying and one day become an English and Spanish teacher. I would also like to further my knowledge by learning Italian and Portuguese. For those people who think they can't learn English, let me tell you: "You don't need a New Year to make a change; all you need is a Monday," to begin to achieve your goals. I'm not saying it's easy; I am saying it's possible.

**Julie Moreno**  
**Horry County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

I'm from Newark, New Jersey. I became a mother early so I dropped out of high school in 1976. I always wanted to be a teacher or nurse. Those were my dreams then. I did volunteer work in the hospital, giving out ice and smiles, and making sure the patients were comfortable. Also during that time, I started working at another development in Totowa, New Jersey.

Then I started working at Saint Rocco Church Day Care part time, and I also became a group home parent for boys, but that's another story.

Anyway, with the knowledge I had I started my babysitting business in the neighborhood. As the business grew I took classes to become certified by the state as a childcare provider foster children, DSS and the Muslims in the I had accomplished in asked if I would like to daycare that was not said I could work under didn't have the this for two years, then closed down and moved to High Point, NC. I started on the road to get my GED but that didn't last long. I quit.



so I could take care of working parents. Next, neighborhood saw what the neighborhood and rent their storefront being used. The Iman their license since I completed license. I did

Now I'm in Myrtle Beach, SC. I'm at the point in my life where I need my GED. Most jobs require the GED or diploma. I have been able to get through life by the grace of God. Amen!

Finally, I am not going to quit this time. I really appreciate all the teachers and staff members that are taking the time to help me get my GED and to pursue my successful goals in life.

**Vicky Nixon**  
**Horry County Adult Education**

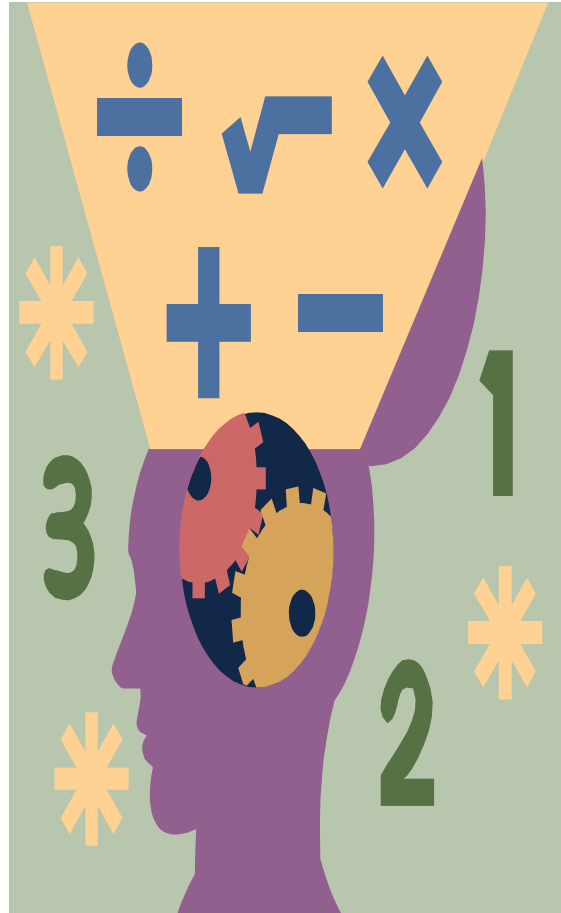


*They gave me 16 years to think about  
what I had done and what I'm going to  
do to change that.*

**Christopher Morris, Palmetto Unified School District**

## In My Shoes

I learned about adult education from family members. I want to get my education to better myself. They told me that it was a good class. The class challenges me to do better and learn more. I know the class is going to take a long time to finish. Adult education classes teach me that you can always learn despite your age, and it is giving me a chance to learn what I could not learn in school. I forgot some of the stuff but I am learning more stuff than I knew before I joined the class. I am trying to learn things, but it is taking me longer to learn some of the things than I would like for it to take. When I leave here I will be more intelligent and more patient. I have a great teacher who shows me how things are done in math. I will always remember this no matter where I go in life. This class has been a great experience. I hope that I can continue to learn and apply what I have learned and will be learning in adult education.



**Tauvarus Brown**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

Before I came to AE I was in high school and working at the same time. I tried several times to pass HSAP, but I never could do it. I graduated from high school but I didn't get my diploma. I decided to continue taking classes somewhere. It took a long time to find AE. Since then I have been trying to get my diploma. No one knows how it feels when you graduate from high school without your diploma. Everyone was happy that I graduated, but I never got the most important part of graduating from high school, my diploma.

**Merilayne Feliz**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**



## In My Shoes

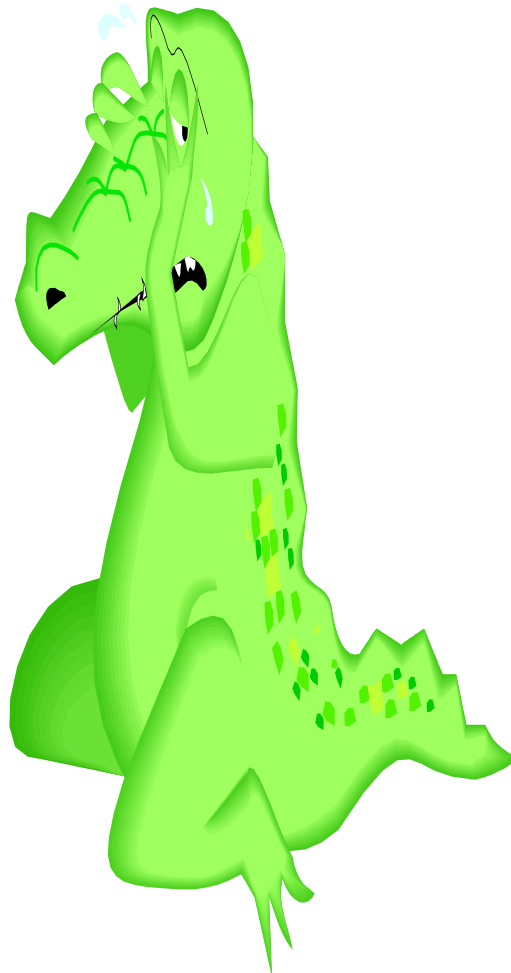
My name is Shakeemiah. I am one month shy of 18 years old. I lived in the state of Georgia then moved to South Carolina. For some reason I could not attend high school. So my mom was advised to sign me up for the AE program. I believe that the program is in the process of educating and teaching people who are over the age of 18 and are at a low level in the education system. I find the program considerable. I really do learn things, and my teacher is an influential person. Adult education is a second chance to me. Some of my friends find the program difficult. They make excuses or just don't attend. To achieve my goals is first on my list of things to accomplish, and it is in me to do whatever it takes.

### Shakeemiah Frost Jasper-Hampton Adult Education



## **In My Shoes**

Let me explain the best way I know how. Well, it is a promise I made to myself in remembrance of my beloved mother, Irine Green. For I do remember how she was crying crocodile tears, while walking behind me across the field out to the dirt road. The roads were dirt in those days to catch the pulp wood truck. She was crying hysterically. I turned to her and said, "Mama, you have ten children to feed. Daddy is sick and cannot work. How are you going to feed all of us?" She said, "Son, you don't have to worry. Don't go out there with those old men. Go back to school. If I eat, you will eat. You are only fourteen years old. Don't go out there with those old men. Please go to school."



**Roger Greene**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

I am a 33-year-old mother, and I stopped school in the tenth grade. I always thought about continuing my education, but I never did until recently. I had the dream but not the drive so to speak. I was attending this meeting at my youngest daughter's school one day.



A lady was there speaking on adult education. I decided then that I would attend.

I started classes and found out sooner than I thought that I was ready to take the GED test. Well, you can't imagine how nervous I was. I didn't want to let anyone down because I had a wonderful teacher who went above and beyond to help me achieve my goals. But mostly I didn't want to let myself down.

Being in adult education really gave me a boost of confidence. I feel better about myself. It feels good to look at my daughters and say, "Mommy is going to school today." My children were a part of my motivation to further my education. My daughters look up to me. They think that mommy is someone special, so I have to be. I have to lead them by example because I want the best for them. I realized that they wanted to be like me. So I have to do something that I want them to do. One of those things is finish school.

When I leave adult education I plan on attending college. I am going to get a bachelor's degree in literature. It has been a long time coming, but I deserve it. Everyone deserves a chance at success. My education is the foundation of my success. With a strong foundation I am free. Free to build a wonderful life upon it. This is only the beginning. There is no telling how far I can go. And I can tell you one thing, there is no stopping me now. This is one experience that I will take with me forever. I am going to the top. And hopefully I will see my classmates there.

**Monique James**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## **My Journey to Adult Ed**

My name is Charles King. I am from Jasper County, but I didn't spend my younger days in Jasper. My mother, younger brother and I moved to Flint, MI, when I was about three or four years old. I started school in the city as a child not making good grades and moving back and forth. I started getting into trouble within schools such as fighting, etc. That became my downfall of missing school and credits and falling behind. I moved back to Jasper County the winter of 2013 to finish my education through AE. I also came to AE to reach my goals and brighten my future.

**Charles King**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

My name is Norma Garcia. I was born on April 27, 1982, in Mexico City. My mother was born in Puebla, and my father was born in Hidalgo. Both arrived to Mexico City very young and married very young. I am the second born and



have four brothers. I am the only sister. My brothers are my favorite friends, and we always will be. Now my family is in Mexico.

I studied and got a degree to become a lawyer and started working for the government when I was twenty-three years old. At the age of twenty-four I traveled here to the United States of America. I have worked in a restaurant, in construction and babysitting.

I got married when I was twenty-six years old to a wonderful man. We have two children: they are four and two years old. When my children were born my husband and I talked. We decided that I would not work. Instead I would care for my children. I am a volunteer for PASOs. I am also learning English.

**Norma Lopez-Garcia**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

I decided to sign up for adult education and get a GED because I want to go to college. I overheard that adult education classes were free so I signed up. I was nervous at first, but I got used to it. I actually thought that the class was going to be harder than I thought, but it really isn't. The reading part is a little easy, but some of the math is hard. I like math, but some of it is kind of difficult. When I was in high school, during graduation I was supposed to get my diploma. I didn't. I don't understand how someone can go to school every day, do his/her assigned work, make excellent grades, and still not receive a diploma. It happened to me. That was rough, but my dream is to go to college. I need adult education to help me make that dream come true and reach my goal of having a great career in Culinary Arts. I desire to be a chef one day.

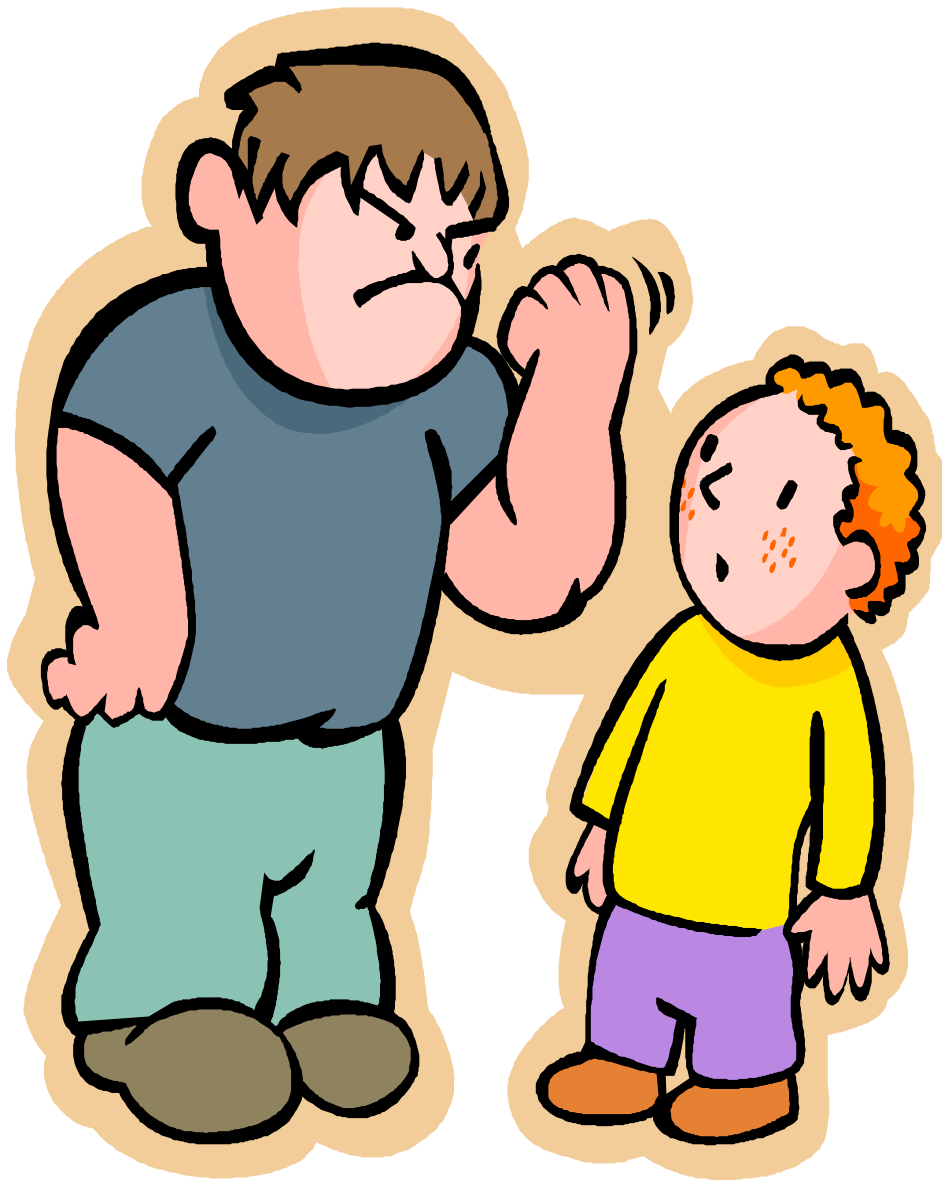


**Tyesha Monroe**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

I got into adult education because I wanted to graduate with a diploma or GED. When I was young, people made fun of me. I was pushed around, bullied, and tortured so very badly that I would just hide some place so nobody would find me. I am happy it is the present and those days are gone. The past is the past.

**Whitley Monroe**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

My name is Edilma. When I was little I helped my mom with my little brothers. We used to go to the river to swim and play with the water, the rocks and the sand. I remember all of this, and I miss everything from my childhood. When I grew up I started working. When I was nineteen years old I babysat. I liked it because the boy was three years old. He was sweet and very intelligent. He had brown curly hair. He liked to run and play with balloons and eat mangoes with salt and lemon. Later I worked on a machine making tortillas. I would start at two in the morning and finish at five o'clock in the afternoon. I liked it because I made friends, and I learned how to make tortillas. When I came here to South Carolina I worked cleaning houses and babysitting in the plantation on Rose Hill in a big house. Now I go to school to improve my English so that I can get a better job and communicate with people better.

**Edilma Morales**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

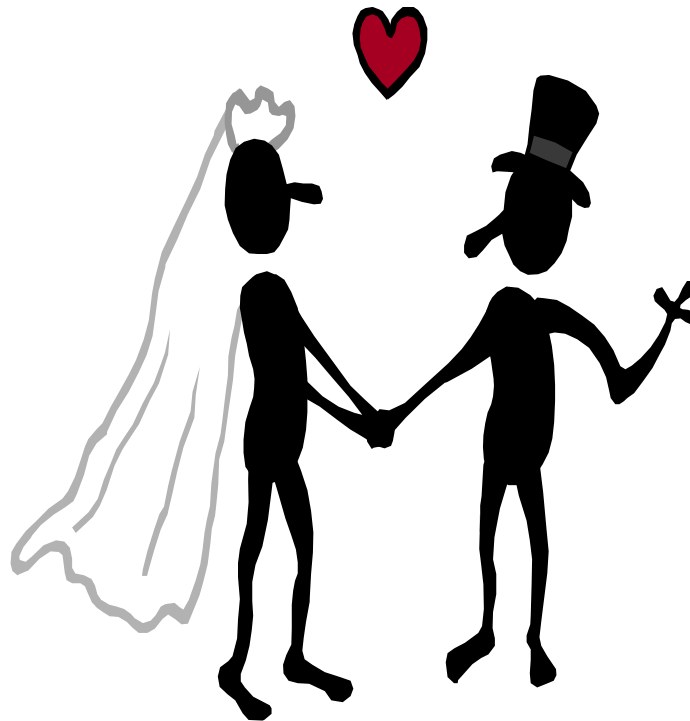


## **In My Shoes**

Hello my name is Dulce Nava. I'm from Guerrero, Mexico. My birthday is in February. I am thirty years old. I have a beautiful family, and I love them. I want to learn English and help my daughters with their homework because my English is very, very bad. I drive to school Monday through Thursday. I am going to school to improve my English. I like to learn English, and I want to be able to speak it in five months.

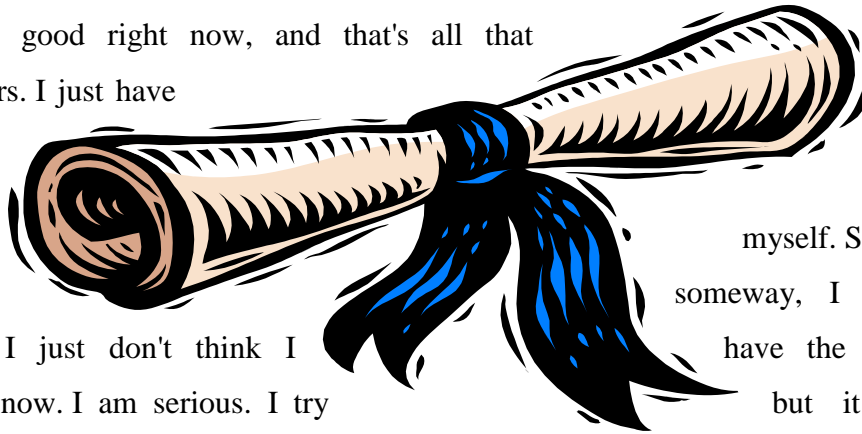
I am happily married, and I want to stay together with my husband forever. I have three brothers. I don't have any sisters or a dad, but I have a mom. She lives in Hilton Head, SC. I am sad because my brothers and all of my family live in Mexico. Maybe next year I am going to go to Mexico to see my family. My teacher is the best person.

**Dulce Nava**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**



## In My Shoes

Hello, my name is Terrance Simmons. The reason I am in AE is because I need to get my diploma soon, if not right now. I ended up here because a friend of mine told me about it and I said, "Ok, I'll go." But I really wanted to take night classes like my friend did. Night classes didn't work out so I came here during the day. I didn't mind as long as I did something. My friend took night classes and during the day I took classes. I had to just move on from there and so far it's going pretty good right now, and that's all that matters. I just have



to push myself. Somehow, someway, I will get there. I just don't think I have the potential right now. I am serious. I try but it is not working, trust me. Trust me. A change is going to come, and when it does, I'm going to rise supernaturally. When I do, I will reign supreme in that I accomplished something that I had the most trouble with, something that made me feel like a failure. I know I'm not thinking negatively. I know what I am capable of accomplishing.

**Terrance Simmons**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

My name is Maria Zarate. I am from Oaxaca, Mexico. I am married and a housewife. I have three boys and one girl. The names of my children are Paola, Yahir, Brayan, and Jonatan. I always like to be with my children. We walk in the afternoon and also go to the park to play, jump, and run. Later, we buy pizza to eat. When we get to the house they all take a bath. Then I cook a lot of food. They love to eat chicken. We go to the restaurants sometime.



Every morning they go to school. I help with their homework: math and science. They like for me to help them with their homework. They tell me I love you mother. I am a mother who is very easy to love. I am always caring for my sons. I am always teaching them to behave in school because it is for their own good.

My English is not very good, so I come to school to learn. I want to be able to talk to my children's teachers.

**Maria Zarate**  
**Jasper-Hampton Adult Education**

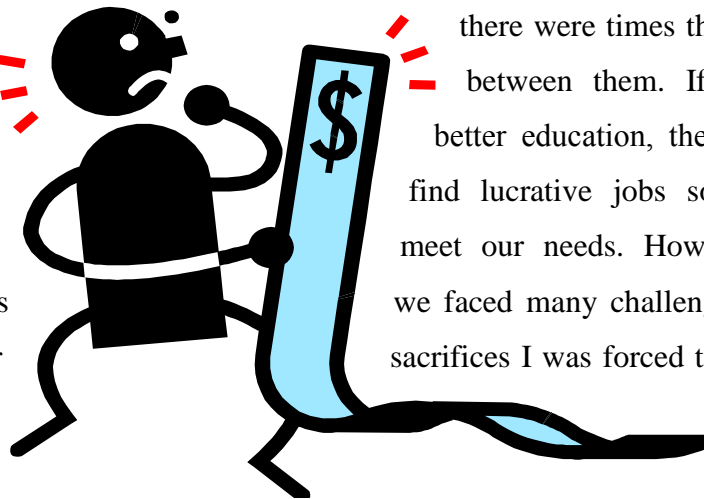
*I was in my mid-thirties and didn't have anything. I mean nothing! No friends. No family. No future. I realized if I didn't change my life, I was either never going to get out of prison, or I was just going to come right back when I did get out.*

**Claude Crump, Palmetto Unified School District**

## Hope for a Better Tomorrow

One's family can be a great motivator in life. They can help him/her choose a career path that could ultimately benefit others. So in the process of helping one's self, he/she could also help others. The people who have motivated me to pursue a better life are my children. They make me want to be a better parent because I don't want them to live the life I did when I was their age. Needless to say, walking the miles I've walked in my shoes has not been easy; but the journey has made me who I am today.

I watched my parents struggle to pay the household bills when I was a child; and there were times that it caused conflict between them. If they both had a much better education, they would've been able to find lucrative jobs so that they could easily meet our needs. However, given their limitations we faced many challenges. One of the major sacrifices I was forced to make was giving up my college education. Although I know my parents wanted the best for me, they didn't have the money to send me to college.



Patricia Cole, who happens to be my mother, influenced me to pursue a career in the health field. She attended school to become a Certified Nurse Aide, after moving from Jamaica to the United States. I was able to attend her graduation. As I stood there watching all the ladies in their white uniforms, I was proud of my mother's accomplishment. I really wish that I could've been a part of the ceremony that night. After graduation when she found work, it took her away from home — so much so that she did not come home some nights. We were left at home with our dad. The only thing that made me sleep better at nights was knowing that my mother was helping someone in need.



In the summer of 1992, I took a job as a babysitter at the age of fifteen. I have to admit it was scary at first because the little girl I sat with was only two years old. I was so young and inexperienced, but watching my mother taking care of us (cooking and cleaning) made it easier for me. The lessons I've gathered by watching her around the house finally paid off.

However, at the age of fifteen I made some detrimental decisions that changed the course of my bright future for the worse. Following these issues, I dropped out of high school and became estranged from my family.



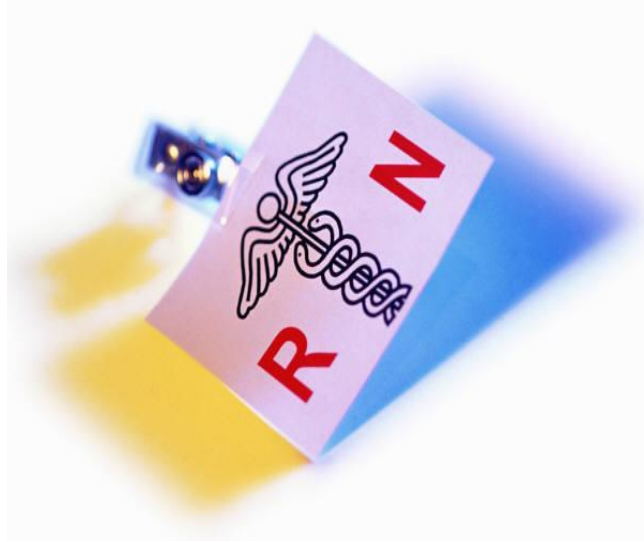
A few months following a series of unfortunate encounters, instead of going back to school to get my Diploma or G.E.D, I decided to work. My second job was in the mall at a jewelry store working as a sales associate, but it just didn't feel right even after years of working there. I then decided to take a course to become a Home Health Aide. This change seems to be what I was created to do. I enjoy helping others and this profession allowed me to do just that. After years as a Home Health Aide, I wanted to go further in the health field. I then decide to take the Certified Nurse Aide course. When I received my certificate, I set a goal for myself, that within two years I would become a Registered Nurse. Realizing that without my high school diploma it's impossible to achieve this new goal, I signed up to get my G.E.D, but I never finished because my job got in the way of my class schedule.

Now that I'm older and have to wear the same shoes my parents once wore, I know now that they're not easy to fill. My mother had help from my dad and when my sister was old enough to work she also gave my mother financial help as well. But, I'm alone in raising my children and have to work twice as hard to support them. This takes away quality time that should be spent with them. However, if I am successful at becoming an RN, I would be able to meet all the needs of my family.

The responsibilities of being a single mother and taking care of my children really prompted me to become a Nurse. When I take them to the doctor

and they leave with a smile on their faces I consider my potential to do the same for others in the health field. If I can make one or two of my patients smile for the day then my work will be done.

Determined to realize my career goals, I enrolled in Lexington Richland 5's Adult Education Program. Since enrollment, I've diligently worked alongside the dedicated teachers here at improving my academic skills. Last week I took the Practice GED Test and scored well enough to take the official exam this week, and I'm confident I will successfully complete it. Once I've accomplished this goal I will continue my



education to become a Certified Medical Assistant or a Registered Nurse.

When my career goals are accomplished, I'm sure it will provide a better paying job in the future to support my children. I just hope and pray that my hard work pays off in the end, especially as a single parent to two young men. My hope for a better future will come with a lucrative salary. But more importantly, my dreams for spending quality time with my boys will be worth all my hard work.

**Farrah Cole**  
**Lexington Richland District 5 Adult Education**

## **My Educational Journey**

Most people finish their high school education. Some people drop out while others go back and get their GED (General Educational Development tests). A GED, which is equivalent to a high school diploma, is better than not having any degree. Therefore, I'm determined to earn my GED so that I can go to college.

The reason I dropped out of school was to be with my nana. She was on her death bed because of cancer. I tried to transfer to Salem High School. They told me to withdraw from Woodruff High School; but once I did they refused to admit me because they were too worried about their graduation rates dropping. Woodruff High School wouldn't let me reenroll because I had just withdrawn my admission. So basically I was left without any options.

I'm in GED classes at Irmo High School now. It's great here. Now I have a chance to improve my future. This program is the best thing that has happened to me. Thanks to this program I can complete my life goals.

When I get my GED I plan to start college. I'm going to get a degree for working on cars, construction, or law enforcement. These possible career paths are potentially my way to give to the world. I am also focused on making my retirement perfect for me and my family. These are my dreams.

Earning one's GED is a great thing. There are more people out there like me who need to pursue their GED because it can also help them secure a better future. If we don't make an effort to becoming more educated, we will limit our potential success. Everyone deserves a second chance to get their education — this is mine and I'm taking full advantage of it.

**Donald Hazelett**  
**Lexington Richland District 5 Adult Education**



## In My Shoes - My Adult Education Journey

Adult education is great. Some people go through adult education for their kids, others go through it because of their jobs; but going through it for one's self is amazing. I am participating in this adult education program because I want to be educated by competent teachers so that I could ultimately go on to earn my college degree in psychology.

I want to complete my high school education because my Grandma Sally would be so mad if I didn't; and since she is not around anymore I know she is watching over me. I didn't exactly drop out of school — there was a lot of drama at my high school, Westside High break. So for eleventh grade I tried to do homeschooling for only half the year. After homeschooling, I tried to go back to Westside High School in January like I'd planned, but the counselors and principals said since I was eighteen, I couldn't return. So I was left with only one option: Adult Education.



I had amazing teachers. The reason I said *had* even though I'm still an adult education student is because I have been enrolled in two different adult education programs before this one. The first one I attended was in Anderson. But I didn't take my time there seriously; so my family and I came to Columbia because my stepmother knew of a better adult education program there. While I was in Columbia, I attended Richland One's program but I was distracted by a guy, and he essentially caused me to lose my focus. Realizing my distraction, my stepmother intervened again and brought me to Irmo High School's Adult Education, and this change was perfect. Since being here I've already taken my GED test and passed most of it because the teachers here have helped me a lot. They sit one-on-one with me to make sure I understand the material. They also make sure I get breaks so that I don't get restless or go crazy trying to keep up with everything they are teaching. The teachers here are totally invested in making sure I complete my goals for the future.

My goal for the future is to be a psychologist. I like to help people with their mental problems and knowing others can talk to and trust me brings me great fulfillment. I've helped all my friends with their problems, and it is a good feeling when I help them. So I've decided to pursue a career helping others resolve their problems.

In conclusion, my journey to and through adult education has been trying, but I've taken the necessary steps to improve my present and future. I understand why people are scared about returning back to school, but once you return you'll discover it is an amazing experience. Thus, I hope everyone who has never graduated will consider attending an adult education program.

**Jessica Lux**  
**Lexington Richland District 5 Adult Education**



## My Adult Education Journey

The journey as an adult education student has been rewarding, long and a lot of times tough. I have had many motivators to get me started on this chapter of my life. If you will stick around a little bit to take a short stroll in my shoes, I'll share some of the reasons why I've chosen this path; as well as my present experience as an Adult Ed student and my post-graduation plans.

A lot of things have motivated me to take this journey. I have three beautiful kids who inspire me and make me want to give them a better life. All



throughout my adult life I have struggled with making ends meet. I've had to literally scrape up pennies for gas and food because without a high school education most jobs don't pay well. During my hardship I had to assess

where I was, how I got there, and what I needed to do to change my situation. I wanted to be a solid role model to my kids and show them that a good education was the key to a better life. I never want to see them to struggle like I did, and still do.



So, on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 I enrolled in Lexington District Five's Adult Education Program and began orientation soon after. As soon as I walked in the door I felt at home. Mrs. Hugee, Mrs. Carter and all of the other instructors are simply wonderful. When I enrolled in a GED program in North Carolina the teachers there just put a book in front of me without offering any additional assistance. However, all the instructors in this program actually get up and teach us like we are in a high school classroom. They give us help when we need it, and if they have to repeat themselves they don't get upset. Instead, they simply



review the topic in question.

I have also met some wonderful people in my class: Raina Audsley, Laurie Lindler and many more. I actually met my best friend in class. Raina Audsley is awesome because she is always there for me when I need her. She has confidence that I can make it through this program and make something better of myself. Her motivation fuels the drive in me to keep going. Laurie Lindler has also grown to be a really good friend of mine. I couldn't make myself better without this program. I am so grateful for this opportunity — what these people do for me and so many others like is a wonderful thing.

As I consider my future plans, I know the next chapter of my life will be completely different from the previous one. As soon as I get my test results



indicating I've passed the GED test, I am going to cry tears of joy. After that, I plan to participate in the graduation ceremony wearing my cap and gown. This experience is something I have dreamt about doing my whole life. My previous goal in life was to become a cop, but as I have gotten older I've realized I want to help people. So I have decided I would love to go into the medical field. I aspire to get my Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) license; and once I earn that degree I

will pursue every certificate I can get to advance in the medical field. When I achieve these accomplishments I will prove all the naysayers in my life wrong.

So I am currently on the path to securing a better life for both me and my family. This Adult Education program is an essential part of my new destination through this journey called life. Being here is worth it! All the time and effort the instructors invest in me (all students) is not wasted. Many people need a second chance to accomplish their life goals and this GED program plays a big part in helping a great number of people get on the path to making those goals/dreams their reality.

**Monica Martin**  
**Lexington Richland District 5 Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

People choose different paths in life. Some paths are hard, some are easy. The path that I chose for myself overall has been very difficult. It's not what I wanted but my poor decisions are what got me to adult education.

Some things that got me in this position are mistakes I made during high school. In school I wasn't a bad student but when I got to 12<sup>th</sup> grade things started going downhill. I started hanging out with people that were bad influences. I know it wasn't entirely their fault. I was old enough to make my own choices; but they impacted me a lot. I stopped going to school and began getting in trouble with police. At this phase in my life things were getting terrible.

However, after enrolling in this GED program things have been pretty good. I really miss home (Myrtle Beach) but it will all pay off in the end. I chose to come to this school because the program at the beach wasn't helpful at all. However, this center is very helpful and the more I learn, the more confident I feel about passing the GED tests.

My plans when leaving here are to go back to Myrtle Beach and go to Horry County Georgetown Technical College. Then, when I complete my degree there, I will attend Bauder Fashion School in Atlanta to pursue a degree in fashion merchandising. I have always enjoyed fashion. I think being your own self and having your own unique style is always a good thing, it sets you apart from everyone else.

Hopefully I will achieve these. I am going to keep bettering myself and push myself to where I need to be. I think I can do it. Now that I'm on the right path I'm excited about realizing my life goals.

**Rylei Thomas**  
**Lexington Richland District 5 Adult Education**





*You have to fight for what you want and  
need in life. So overall, what was my  
struggle to obtain my education? Myself!*

**Irshad Muhammad, Palmetto Unified School District**

*What I do know is that it only takes one  
day, one moment, to change your life  
forever.*

**Winfred Blackwell, Sr., Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes**

My name is Antoinette Arnold. I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I have a five year old son that is very special to me. My mother and I moved to Bennettsville, South Carolina, about two years ago. I decided to stay in Bennettsville with my mother to get my life together. I am a single parent, and it motivated me to go back to school. Now I attend Marlboro County Adult Education.

I was told by a friend about Marlboro County Adult Education. My mother motivated me to go and get my high school diploma. It has been hard being a single parent working two jobs to survive. While attending Marlboro County Adult Education it made me realize that I could do and be anything. It refreshed skills that I had forgotten. It gave me courage to work on my math, language and computer skills.



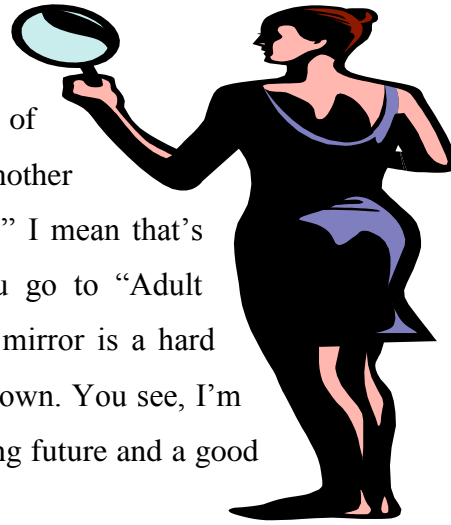
While attending Marlboro County Adult Education I passed both parts of the HSAP (High School Assessment Program) examinations: language arts and mathematics. It made me feel like I could do anything if I put my mind to it. I have met the sweetest teachers. It really has changed my life because without adult education, I do not know where I would be had I not attended. It has motivated me to strive for my goals. My goals are to finish the hours that I need to get my high school diploma and to attend college.

I am very thankful for Marlboro County Adult Education. I would not want to be in any other school. By the time I finish and accomplish my goals I will be the happiest person on earth. It makes me feel real good to know that I have not given all the way up on my dreams. It also makes me feel special that I have people that have motivated me to go back to school to achieve my goals.

**Antoinette Arnold**  
**Marlboro County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

I was in high school maybe a good three years before I decided to come to Adult Education. I never thought at the age of eighteen years old that I would be just another statistic of a so called “high school dropout.” I mean that’s what society sees when they hear that you go to “Adult Education” right? I mean what I see in the mirror is a hard worker just trying to get away from a small town. You see, I’m just trying to get a diploma to have an amazing future and a good life for my future family.



I have been told that you “don’t judge a book by its cover,” but yet when I tell people that “Oh, I don’t go to the high school, I go to Adult Ed.” I know at that moment people are thinking that oh, I took the easy route and went for my GED. Wrong! I have been on the verge of going the easy route but you know what, I’ve been raised to never give up on my goals and keep trying until I get what I need. So, for those people who judge me for going to Adult Ed, watch me get my diploma and make it somewhere in life.

This journey has taught me that I need to look out for me and me only. The difficult part about this journey is all the work that I’m being piled with. The only thing that I have on my mind though is making my family proud and showing society that no, I’m not just a “high school dropout” or another statistic. I’m a person that proves that it doesn’t matter where you get your diploma from, just as long as you work hard to achieve your goals and dreams in life.

**Megan Gray**  
**Marlboro County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

I came to Adult Education so I can get my diploma. I also came because I learn better on my own.

While being in Adult Education I earned a unit of credit for my high school diploma. I also got some awards for being an honor roll student. I've passed the English part of HSAP. I've taken the Math HSAP and I am waiting to see if I passed.

After I get my high school diploma I plan on going to technical school. I want to go to tech to be a cosmetologist. After I finish school, I hope I will have a good job that will enable me to have a great future.

**Kimberly Hernandez**  
**Marlboro County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes**

When I was young I made some bad decisions in my life. I thought I was just having some experiences but it all resulted in consequences I wasn't ready for. Through it all, I managed to succeed.

In September of 2011, I became pregnant. It was unexpected. I was very upset and overwhelmed. I couldn't figure out how I was going to provide and take care of an infant.



As months went by, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy. It wasn't easy at all. I had many sleepless nights, and I was always tired. I would go to school the next morning and sleep in class. My grades were failing, and I definitely wasn't learning anything. I decided to quit school.

After a year passed by, I realized I needed to further my education. Therefore, I could give my son a fighting chance in life. I knew I needed to be able to provide for him and be financially stable. Without an education, this would be impossible.

In August 2013, I enrolled in Adult Education. It was the best thing I could have ever done. They offered daycare for babies, which was more convenient for me. I can learn and work on my diploma without worrying about my son, because he's in great care.

After I graduate, I plan to go to a four year college. I want to become a child psychologist and help others. An education can take you far in life. There's no such thing as "I Can't."

**Kiyanna McKeever**  
**Marlboro County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

My journey to Adult Education was really a motivating decision. The reason was that I needed to receive my GED. I needed it not just to obtain a job, but also receiving my GED is one of my goals.



During my time at Adult Education I have learned a lot of new things and met new people. I have learned several things like using the IPAD in class. But the most important thing that stands out is my ability to write an essay. I've actually started to enjoy writing essays.

After I receive my GED, my anticipated journey is to try and further my education. Learning never stops. You learn something new every day. And with receiving my GED it will open up doors for other accomplishments.

My journey to Adult Education was a motivated decision. To receive my GED would be a huge step so that I can move on with my life. After I receive my GED I plan to further my education. This would be a huge step in my journey to reach my goal.

**Bernard Palmer**  
**Marlboro County Adult Education**

*Sorry if you catch me snoring because many days when I come to school I am “dog tired.” I am coming to school to be a good example for my girls and to show them that they need to stay in school.*

**George Medlin, Pickens County Adult Education**



*My shoes may be old and run down, but  
with faith in God I will always make it  
through my situations.*

**Anonymous, Fairfield County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes - My Adult Education Journey

My adult education journey has had many difficulties, things I have had to overcome and endure to get where I am at today.

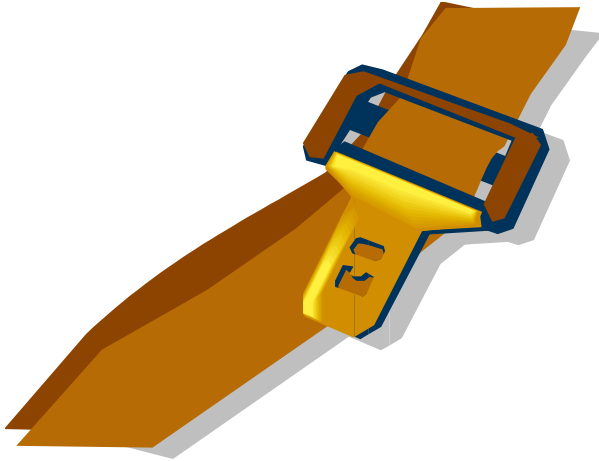
Due to all my incarceration throughout my life, I've always tried to be grown before my appointed time. I've had numerous jobs without a high school diploma or G.E.D. I myself got hooked on making the little amount of money that I earned on the job that I held at that time.

I didn't see why a high school diploma or G.E.D. would do me any good. I had a job, clothes on my back and money in my pocket. What else did I need? At this time I was living with my mother. I didn't have to worry about bills. I figured mothers are supposed to keep a roof over their child's or children's head no matter what.

Then comes a baby boy of a working teenager. What I'm I suppose to do now? I have a baby boy with a lousy job that only gets me by. Now I have another mouth to feed, back and make his head. Let's My job doesn't medical or to myself, job that pays will be a whole gotten better? and a boy later gotten any job that will only me but for mouths that need to be fed. Remember when it was just me to look out for and a high school diploma or G.E.D. was far from my mind?



clothes to put on his sure a roof stays above not talk about medical. know anything about dental insurance. I said "Once I find another better then everything lot better." Have things No. Now a baby girl things still haven't better with finding a pay enough for not three more extra



I've figured out that a high school diploma or G.E.D. can help you a lot down the line when looking for a good job. So yes, I've finally buckled my seatbelt on the education train, it's not too late to better myself. I've went from "don't need a diploma to I need a diploma, fast."

Today I'm a step away from taking the G.E.D. test. Am I excited? Yes. Nervous? Yes! But I'm glad to finally say "I have my G.E.D.," when filling out applications for a job or I can take my education to another level to be able to get a job with medical and dental insurance. My adult education journey has been a long one, but I've finally made it to that piece of paper called "Diploma."

**Sandtonyo Barber**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## In My Shoes

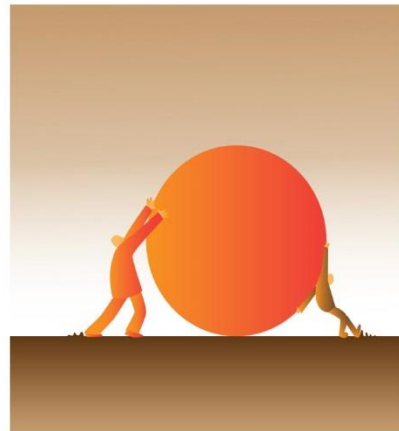
Have you ever had to live a life that was similar to what someone else lived? What about going through ups and downs with or without the support of family and friends? Well, I am at that point in my life right now. A point where it feels like just for a moment the whole world has stopped for me. Growing up in a house with four brothers was not fun as it appeared to be. I was the second oldest son born to my mother Ruthie Bellamy and father William Bellamy. Since my father was the only one working to provide for our family, I could only imagine how tough it was for him. I believe that having such an obligation to your family whose survival completely depended on you is hard. Consequently, I could count on one hand how many times I actually spent a day hanging out with my father. I do not doubt that he loved us; however, we were growing up without his discipline. Of course, our mother did what she could. But as young men, my brothers and I often hid things from her. We figured she would not understand because she was a woman.



Between the struggles in my everyday life and schooling, I needed and found an outlet to help overcome the overwhelming depression I was feeling. I began hanging out all types of hours — planning a life of destruction. I did things such as joining in gang activities, drinking and smoking pot. Eventually, my parents found out about my activities and lectured me about them, but I rebelled and continued until I was no longer allowed to live around my brothers. Angry with the whole world I began selling drugs to survive. Pushing everything righteous that I was taught in the back of my mind, I chose the fast life and drove its direction with full speed. My motto was to get paid so that by the time I have a family of my own I would not have to struggle to take care of them. My kids and I could spend lots of time together and not have their dad gone all the time for any reason. Consequently, I was in for a rude awakening.

After having my first child in 2001, a son I named K'hadere, I was arrested for distributing crack cocaine to an undercover officer. The bond for my release was set at \$35,000, which I made five months later. K'hadere's mom and I ended up separating around 2004 when he was three years old because of my decision to continue my path of destruction. I was around for him financially, but physically I belonged to the streets. A few years later, I met the mother of my three daughters: Tykira, Nigeria and Serenity. After feeling so guilty about how unreliable I was in K'hadere's life, I immediately found a job. Just like my father, I was the only provider for my family, but unlike him, I worked part-time in the streets. Things seemed to be unstoppable at first, then jealousy consumed the streets, and I got set up. I was hunted by narcotic agents for a distribution warrant. I got caught in the process with a loaded gun and a tremendous amount of drugs in my possession, which sealed my fate in the world. I pled guilty and was sentenced to 10 years in prison away from everyone I loved.

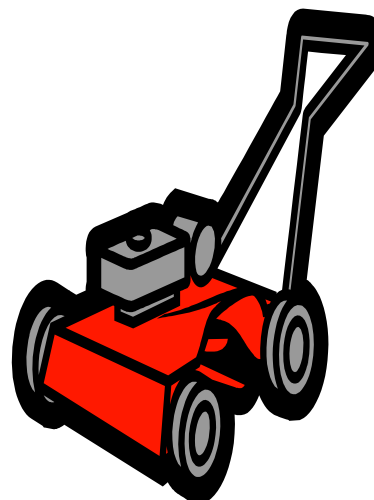
As a result, I am persuaded to believe the saying, "Out of sight, out of mind" because my family has moved on with their lives while I pay for my mistakes. I am forced to do time while convincing myself that I will make it through this ordeal with my head held high. I have learned to walk a straight line no matter what obstacles try to block my path. Instead of removing these obstacles, I continue to walk ahead trusting in God to make a way for me each and every day. I have accepted the fact that my position is to make me depend on Him and only Him. I conclude that my deliverer and my provider is Jesus Christ.



**Tyrone Bellamy**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes: My Adult Education Journey**

I'm a Vietnam Veteran, that makes me sixty-five years old. I spent four years in the Army. During this time, I went to Adult Education classes for small engine repair. After graduating, I began working on lawn mowers as a hobby and found out that I really enjoyed the work. At first I had a hard time learning small engine repair, I had always done construction work. My wife passed away in 1997. Sometime after that I had to retire due to stress and anxiety.



Right after I retired I met my second wife. We loved going to the mountains, walking the trails along the water falls and dancing. My life changed forever when I came to prison. Everything stopped for me. It's been two years now and sometimes I still don't understand what happened. What I do know is that it only takes one day, one moment, to change your life forever. Then along came another educational opportunity. I jumped at the chance!

I know that some would say I'm too old, but when I saw the opportunity to go back to school and get my G.E.D., I felt that now was the time to get an education that could help me with small engine repair. I know I need to take a certified small engine repair course and a GED will help me do this. I love going to school now, and I love the thought of having my GED.

Thanks to the Perry Correctional Institution Education Department, after forty-one years of being out of school, I'm getting the chance to go back to school. I want to learn everything I can. At my age, it will not be easy for me, but this is what I want for my life and what I want to do with the rest of this time.

**Winfred Blackwell, Sr.  
Palmetto Unified School District**

*I pick my girls up to take them to school  
just to spend time with them. Just a car  
ride with them is all I need to make me  
happy. So if you were in my shoes you  
would find an old worn out pair of shoes  
with a good soul and a strong knot.*

**George Medlin, Pickens County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes: My Adult Education Journey**

I'm an individual that takes my work seriously because anything less would be a disservice, not only to myself but to everyone I come in contact with. I try to motivate others through my words in poems, songs and images and pictures. You see, I am an artist. It's a wonderful gift that God has bestowed upon me and for which I am very grateful. But it is also a gift that I turned into a curse. So when my eyes came across the theme "IN MY SHOES" I felt more than obligated to tell my story hoping to inspire, as well as educate, someone. My journey began with my struggle with education.



As I mentioned earlier, I'm an artist, and as a child that's all I wanted to be. That's where everything began and ended in my mind. When I was happy I wanted to do nothing but draw or paint. I would go into the world of my imagination. I would grip people emotionally so they could feel as good as I felt. That enhanced my passion even more. When I was sad I would write poetry. Most of it would be dark, expressing my need for someone to shed a positive light on me. I had the idea that I didn't need an education because God made me an artist. Wasn't that enough? Don't get me wrong, I was a very bright child. I just didn't see where science, math and history fit in with my art. Writing I could see, but even that was put on the

backburner because 'I'm gifted.'

As I got older, I found it was very difficult for me to explain my art work, so I dropped out of school. I didn't acquire the necessary skills to be able to express my message through my art. It caused me to be very introverted.



I was incarcerated at the age of 21 with no high school diploma, no GED and very little education at all. For the first seven years, my time was spent expressing to everyone how much pain I was going through mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I



did not have a clue as to which direction I was going. As a result I found myself where I didn't want to be, in a super max cell. Being there made me realize that by not gaining the proper knowledge and education, I had wasted years of my life stuck in a fantasy world I created as a child artist. I knew then that in order for my life to change I had to change. On the twelfth of July in 2003, I left prison (mentally and spiritually) and have not returned. That was the day I made up my mind to turn my incarcerated situation into a university.

So I'm not in prison anymore; it is now my high school, college and vocational school. I came to this institution in February 2005 hungry, seeking knowledge. I only had an eighth-grade education. I was thinking that if I could get my GED I could accomplish everything I needed academically. My GED instructor challenged my thinking in a way that I had never been challenged. She saw potential in me that I didn't even see in myself.

Then she molded that potential and showed me that I could accomplish much more than just a GED. I never have properly thanked her but I would like to do that now. She taught me how to teach through my art. She taught me comprehension skills which build social skills which build relations, and that is where I got the best results. She also taught me that it is very necessary to have problem solving skills. Suddenly the world became more interesting, and it seemed that I could reach out into the universe and grab any star I chose. I felt like I could accomplish anything, my confidence level was sky high.

After completing and obtaining my G.E.D. I became a real student of education. I am now a tutor in the classroom. It's very challenging but fulfilling because when I look at some of the young men they seem as lost as I once felt. They who are seeking and looking for direction, beaten down by a harsh situation, were not properly educated. That's when I step up and impart to them the knowledge and wisdom my instructor imparted to me. They are the future. I have walked in their shoes and understand.

I'm planning for the future because education is a never ending cycle. The more I tutor the more I learn, and that's real adult education. Walking this long road has taught me that I can create more than just a drawing. Life goes on, education goes on, and I keep walking this road "in my shoes."

**Caesar Covington**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



*If I just had more time in life I think  
my shoes would fit.*

**George Medlin, Pickens County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

My journey to adult education is probably not so different from most of the other inmates here at Tyger River. Most inmates suffer from a lack of education. Without a proper education most of us were lead to a life of crime just to survive.

As for me personally, I grew up in foster care because my parents lacked the education needed to get good jobs away from crime. My dad quit school in the sixth grade. Sometimes he would work part time at a saw mill, but mostly he sold moonshine and marijuana. He didn't have the opportunities to better himself and ended up spending most of his life in prison.

My mom quit school in the ninth grade because she got pregnant. Her status was changed from student to mother, and she never got the chance to become a student again. Raising two young boys became her way of life until we were old enough for her to go to work. With her lack of education the only job she could get to help support her family was in a textile mill. Of course Mom would help Dad sell moonshine and weed on the side.



Both of my parents were in and out of jail for most of my young childhood until my dad came home early and caught my mom and his best friend in the bed together. Dad shot them both, killing his best friend and injuring my mom. Needless to say, Dad went to prison, and my brother and I went to foster care.

All through foster care, the foster families, social workers and guidance counselors encouraged us to get an education. They steadily told us that an education is the most important thing in life and that an education is something that no one can ever take away. Once you learn something you will always know it. We were also told that we needed an education to be good and/or better at anything that we decided to do in life. Much later, I finally realized just how right they were.

My brother quit school in the tenth grade. Once he got a job and a car, school was history. At the time, his job was a laborer on a construction site. Now, almost 30 years later, my brother is still a laborer on a construction site. He never wanted an education so he is stuck at the bottom of the ladder.

As for me, I quit school in the twelfth grade. I was all set to graduate but during spring break my senior year I went to Myrtle Beach and met up with some beach bums. We ended up going from beach to beach up and down the east coast for almost two years. At the time I didn't care about an education. Life was a party.

Without a proper education I was unable to get a good job. That led me to



a life of crime. I was unable to get a good job and then progressed to breaking into houses. It wasn't long before I was into armed robberies. Due to my life of crime and lack of education, I have spent most of my life in prison.

Incarceration didn't stop me from crime. Stealing and robbing was the only way I knew to make money so I

continued to commit crimes inside prison. A few years ago while in lockup, I decided to take a good look at myself. I was in my mid-thirties and didn't have anything. I mean nothing! No friends. No family. No future. I realized if I didn't change my life, I was either never going to get out of prison, or I was just going to come right back when I did get out.

I got to thinking about what I could do to change my life. The first thing I needed to do was to get an education. I remembered all those people telling me how important an education was. At first I was too embarrassed to go back to school because almost everyone was half my age. Finally, I swallowed my pride and signed up.



The first thing I noticed is that I'm not stupid! Most of this stuff is easy. A lot of adult education deals with everyday life: reading, writing and math are a normal part of everyday living. I was so enthusiastic to learn that I was able to excel in my class and to help others along the way.

I encourage everyone who doesn't have their GED to get it while you can. Sign up today. If you already have your GED, the education program here at Tyger River still has something to offer. Work Keys and various vocational classes are available. It's never too late to learn. You can always better yourself. Please sign up today.

**Claude Crump**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

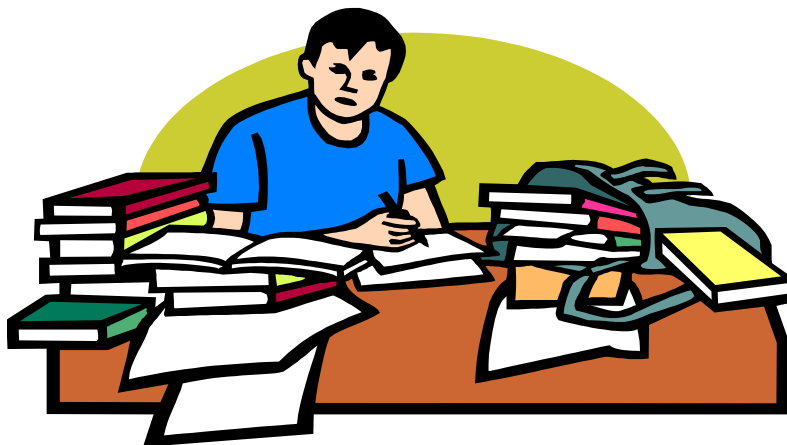
*In my shoes is a man who will not take  
“No” for an answer.*

**Anonymous, Fairfield County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

Who can achieve anything worth having in life without work or effort? This question has been asked by me personally several times along my journey towards achieving the goal of attaining my G.E.D. Since this is not the first or second time I have sought to attain this goal (achieving G.E.D.) I kind of understand the process of failure. Not failure in the sense of “giving up” or “losing hope” but failure in the sense of not accomplishing or getting done what you know is important. However inherent in failure, I believe is another mechanism. One in which you learn that the opposite of failure is success and the root of that success is education. This success does come with its demands. Those are study, work, effort, attention, and confidence in self and teachers. My most important lesson learned in this journey is that without hard work and focus, without commitment and dedication, the difference between failure and success is a thin line. So in conclusion, my educational journey has taught me that the mistakes I’ve made previously and all of what I accounted for as failure was only temporary and just another opportunity to try a little harder. And in hard work towards a particular goal, in this case G.E.D., is where I believe I shall receive the best rewards for my labor.

**Johnny Davis**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**





## **In My Shoes - My Adult Education Journey**

The only way I can answer that statement is to go back to my childhood and talk about the struggles that I went through growing up that interfered with my education. Some of my struggles that held me back were that we moved a lot, my confidence level and a broken home.

As a child my father spent eleven and a half years in the service. When I was about six or seven years old, he left the service to pursue a career in country music. We moved all over the U.S., Canada and Panama. I went from one school to another. By the time I would catch up in one school we would move again. I couldn't keep-up.



My confidence level was low due to the way I couldn't keep-up, and my father would call me names and put me down. I know my mother tried to help me learn, but that memory is very faint. When I was thirteen, dad and mom divorced, and I didn't care about school. When I turned seventeen I quit school in the ninth grade. Later in life I found a trade I fell in love with and made a career out of it. Because of that I did try to get my G.E.D. in the late 80's, but I missed it by three points, so I gave up on it.

In conclusion, after about twenty-five years later as an older adult, my education journey is still going. I have made a lot of bad decisions in my life. Those decisions put me where I am at today. I am trying to get my G.E.D. again. This adult education journey has been a journey! After being out of school all these years it has been hard and aggravating, but if I get it this time it will be well deserved. This is not the end of my journey. I hope to further my education and to encourage all young and old to stay in school.

**Danny Gauldin**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

My adult education journey has taken me on a long road, with lots of success and strength. I have overcome a lot of my hard times. I am just thankful that I have accomplished my main goals. I know the journey I took made me become someone I've never been in life, with the journey I have traveled.

My journey took me sometime to experience a lot of good knowledge, wisdom and good understanding of life. I accomplished and succeeded. You have to “set goals” for yourself. You have to be yourself and focus, learning the things you need to learn. Studying and understanding as much as possible will help you know many things much easier. I thought I could never make it, but what I know now is that I did make it. I know if I can do it, anybody can.

I have experiences in my life that has helped me a lot. My grandmother never knew how to read or write, but she knew how to count money! That is one of the things that made a change in my mind. If my grandmother did not know how to read or write, but count money, which shows that anybody can do anything they want to do as long as they set their mind into succeeding. Just never give up and keep going with success and positive people around you that can help you manifest and achieve better things in life. Life has so much for you. The world will show you how to survive on your own, so just make wise choices and be smart. Always think ahead before anything and you will learn the basics of life.

**John Granados**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



*My life's trials and tribulations have  
made me who I am today, a mother of  
two Cherubs, Daughter of Seraphims, a  
wife of God's son, and a sister with  
unconditional love.*

**Frances Pantoja, Fairfield County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

Today is December 1, 2013, and today is my 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday. I have walked a mighty long journey in my size 15 shoes. Through all the good and bad times, God continues to give me strength to keep moving on and molding me into the person I should be. Honestly, I have made a lot of wise and sometimes wrong decisions. The biggest mistake I ever made was to drop out of high school and then indulge in drug activities. During my younger years, I always loved to go to school and even church. From Head Start on up until my first and only year in high school, I have always made good grades. There were many times that I even made the honor roll.



I started making wrong decisions and choices around the time I was in junior high. My mother and her husband got separated. When I was younger, he used to take good care of my mother, sister, brother, and me. There was nothing he would not do for us. When he and my mother first met, he liked to smoke marijuana. However, my mother convinced him to leave it alone. A couple of years later, we found out that he was smoking cocaine. His new habits caused problems in the household. He paid the bills late and sometimes he stole money from my little sister's piggy bank. My mother tried to talk him into getting some help so he could kick his addiction. She gave him chance after chance and time after time. Therefore, when he stole from my sister's piggy bank, she had to let him go. While all of this was going on, my younger brother and I were introduced to the world of drugs.

With only our mother to take care of us, we were determined to take care of ourselves and help her as well. We got tired of seeing our mother struggle to take care of us. My biological father was there when I was younger, but when I started getting high from marijuana, drinking and other things he cut me off. During my 9<sup>th</sup> grade year, I asked my father to get me a pair of shoes so I could go to school. Needless to say, I never got them until my homeboy Monkey Fever gave me some marijuana to sell. He asked me why I was not going to school, so I told him. As a result, Monkey Fever took me to the Florence Mall so I could get me some new school shoes.

It was the 94-95 school season, and I got suspended for smoking cigarettes at school. I attended the alternative school for a while and eventually I quit. Since I got caught up in the wrong environment, I was grown before my time. One day I thanked my homeboy, and he wanted to know why. I told him for teaching me how to hustle so I can take care of myself. Monkey Fever told me that he did not teach me anything. He did that to show me that it was not the way I should be living, and he always wanted me to finish school.



Now, here I am 17 years later and doing my fourth bid. Since I have been down, someone I can truly call a friend, Virtus Bellamy and my teacher Dr. Thomas have influenced me to complete my high school equivalency diploma (GED). I finally brought my high school education to a completion. On November 14, 2013, I took my GED test and passed on the first try. I have just begun a new walk in my shoes.

**Julius Gurley**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## In My Shoes

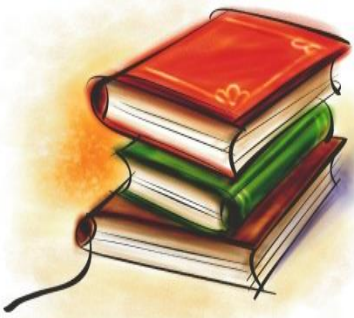
My Adult Education journey began when I was 17. I had been expelled from school and started working, but my Dad still wanted me to get my education. I told him the only way I was going to get my GED was if he went with me. I finally got him to go with me, and we took the test together on the same day. I rushed through the test and did not do very well. I failed by ten points. That was devastating. But my Dad, he passed his exam being one of the top two in his class.

A couple of years later my Adult Education journey started again, only this time I was locked up. I was 24 years old and locked up for approximately 3 years when I finally decided to get my GED. I wanted to prove that I wasn't just locked up not doing anything to better myself. I also wanted to get my GED for my grandmother who had been raising me since I was a year and a half old. This would be something that would make her proud, and I had messed up a good portion of my life already.

I am finally in class where I am able to be taught and achieve my goal of earning my GED. I started the class and thought to myself, "I'm not going to be able to do this." Not because I was not capable, but because they put me in a class of what I would consider children. They only came to school because they had to, not because they wanted to be there, like I did. Not long after I started getting in trouble and eventually landed myself in the Special Management unit. For 23 hours a day, I was in a small cell with nothing but my thoughts to keep me company.



I thought my chances of obtaining my GED were over. I was not able to attend school due to fact I was in SMU. But one day my hopes were restored when the principal of the school sent me a GED book to study with. I studied hard for three weeks going through all the materials I needed to pass. I wanted to be prepared, and I didn't want to miss it again by a measly 10 points.



The day came for me to go and take my test, and I was nervous as a child who has to give an oral presentation in front of the whole class. I started thinking to myself “you can do this.” I had studied and prepared myself and was ready to knock this test out. I sat down and was given the test and all of a sudden, I could not remember a thing. My mind went completely blank, but I took a deep breath and focused on what needed to be done. I finished the test with no problems. A week later I was told that I had passed my GED test. I was so relieved the stress was lifted from my shoulders.

Some more great news came my way after I was told that I passed. The principal of the school offered me a job working in the library. I was excited. I wanted this job for a long time and knew I needed my GED in order to get it. I was so ecstatic about my GED and getting a job in the library. I called that special person that stood by my side through everything. I called the person that pushed me to get my education, and I wanted her to feel the same excitement, overwhelming satisfaction that I was feeling, my grandma. Hearing her voice filled with excitement over my accomplishments filled me up with such joy. I finally completed my journey that I had been on for the past few years, and I wanted to thank the principal, Education Staff and of course, my grandma for giving me the chance to better myself.

Now it’s time for me to begin a new journey. I plan to further my education in each and every way. Having my education is something that not only will help my confidence and self-esteem, but will also help open doors in my life for the better. I encourage everyone to get an education and to pursue their dreams.

**Michael Hobby**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

My educational journey here at LEE-CI has been a great experience. The educational staff here takes great pride in their jobs. Sometimes I wish I had as much pride in learning that they have in teaching me. Now I feel like it is time to build a better future by first getting my G.E.D. Then getting out of prison and opening my own company.

First I would like to thank Ms. Desai for her hard work. That lady has made sure that HODGE, JAY has been at school even though I did not want to be at times. Plus she's always put up with my impatience! She does care whether you receive your education or not. Ms. Brisbon is a great lady also. She's kind hearted. When I did not get my G.E.D., I wanted to give up but she talked me out of it. Now I want to be an example for the young guys, to let them know not to give up.

The G.E.D. will be a great benefit for me to have so I can show my kids that no matter how old you are, you should never give up on your education. By furthering my education after I receive my G.E.D., I would love to take college courses in business economics. One day I would like to own my own business.



Meanwhile college would give me a little more knowledge on the best way to run a business, because it would allow me to be able to support my family like a real man should. Since my wife died in 2010 I've really pushed myself away from furthering my education. But I need to really show my kids more than ever now that their father is capable of receiving a G.E.D. I will be testing on December 5. I'm going to send them a copy of it after I pass it. I feel like it's something they can go back and look on later in life just in case they decide to change their mind about their education.



In conclusion, the educational journey I've traveled has been rocky at times for me. But the staff here at LEE education department has worked very hard to get me where I'm at now. And believe me, I'm going to try to make them proud. The journey does not stop it only goes forward! Therefore, by you getting a good education great things will come. Move forward with your education; don't be a Quitter.

**Jay Hodge**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

My adult education journey in my own words has been difficult in my physical world of imprisonment. I have run into many obstacles along the way, from hospital visits to being locked up in SMU. I have started making changes for the best in my life that can affect my children in a good way. Hard work pays off, and now I am studying to pass my GED exam this December.

My adult education journey has been an extremely difficult one. I have had many difficulties with family and lawyers. Family can be hard on you when you are imprisoned, and have children out there in the world that they now have to care for. Even though you are imprisoned for whatever reason, you now have to deal with lawyers that speak a total different lingo than you do. For many, prisoners are imprisoned for the wrong reasons. It is also difficult when you have a woman that loves you, and you love her. Imprisonment can be a strain on the both of you and your relationship.

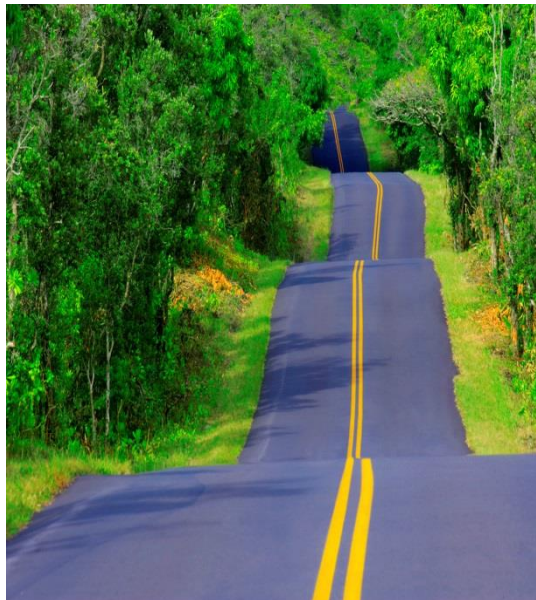
Adult Education has opened my eyes up to making changes for the future that will affect my children's lives in a good way, by me taking the time to go back and obtain my education. It shows my kids that an education is important enough to me, that I will go back to obtain it despite my age. Change is a good thing for self-betterment and for setting future goals. Getting my education is a key building block in putting my life back together again.



My hard work in adult education has paid off. I have been given the chance to obtain my GED this December. Studying long days and nights on reading, writing, math, social studies, and science were the core of my study time. Part of my hard work was the writing of request form after request form, and being told that I was placed on the waiting list for school repeatedly. I admit that it got tiresome, but I stuck in there and continued to ask about school every chance that I had to see someone from the school building. I finally was admitted to school, took my TABE test, and passed at a high enough grade level to take the Pre-GED exam. I passed the Pre-GED exam that was given to me. This is why I was given the chance to take my GED exam so soon.

In conclusion, I would like to say that during my adult education, I have run into some hard times. But I now have one of my goals in sight. It has been a long, hard road. At times it's made me think twice about obtaining my education.

Even though I  
an education to  
I want in the  
is the key no  
young you are  
live in an age that  
necessary to have  
Constant elevation  
education that one  
Remember each  
the building



know that I need  
obtain the job that  
future. Education  
matter how old or  
because we now  
education is  
to do anything.  
is the best  
could have.  
one teaches one is  
blocks to

everyday life. For how can you teach someone something that you do not know yourself? I say get you together and let us get on the train to being better educators of our young that have so much to learn from us, for they are the future.

**Dominic Leggette**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

My adult educational journey was a rough and rugged road, like travelling across the hot burning sands without a camel or water. I was a bright child and very energetic. I learned to walk, tie my shoes and say my abc's and 123's at grand-moms house and preschool. From her was my 1<sup>st</sup> learning in the bible and goodness, to love all people and hate no one. I never heard her say a foul word; she was a kind gentle and compassionate woman.



Because of traumatic experiences in my early years I started having behavior problems. I was put out of the public school system in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. From there I was in several treatment centers, boarding schools and foster homes. Being that I was compulsive hyperactive, with a short attention span, and low self-esteem, this made it hard for me to complete high school. I was supposed to graduate in the class of 1987; however I got my diploma in 1989. In my heart I never felt like I truly earned it. It is my belief that the school system gave my diploma to me to get me out the way. I did not have the basic educational necessities of a high school graduate.

In 2006 my beloved grand-mom passed away. And in 2012 I lost my mother also. I promised them both that I would extend my adult education. My goal is to do something with the remainder of my life to make them proud. I think obtaining my GED and extending my adult education will bring me closer to my goal and make me more ready for the world when I'm released from prison. I do not desire for anyone to walk in my shoes in their educational journey. However, I wish for all to be determined to educate yourselves, and a GED can help you. If you are a young person who has not finished school or an older person like myself, who desires an education to succeed and be successful, then go get your GED. I strongly suggest that you all take advantage of the educational programs the schools have to offer.

**Michael Lesesne**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes**

Each day, my steps repeat anew.

Down the same walk, within my “assigned area,” I dwell —

stuck as I am, ID on left collar, always in a cell.

Night after day; remembering each bird that flew, like those I knew.

Each day, my steps repeat anew.

In my shoes, I let things pass.

I must laugh it all off, saving pieces of this broken heart of glass —

each closer to the last, with so much time still to pass.

Each day, my steps repeat anew.

No choice for me. Only remembrance of such glee.

Life; exacting fee. In my shoes, only I can know —

this place, they claim I've somehow sown.

Each day, my steps repeat anew.

Out between the bars, the hopes I knew have flew;

but on occasion I see them out there, peeking in —

searching for me to let me know, they've grew!

Each day, my steps repeat anew.

**Johnny E. Mahaffey**  
**Palmetto Unified School**





## **In My Shoes**



I wear one hell of a pair of shoes. It's a pair that I wouldn't give anyone or wish on anyone. I have been going down one heck of a road in life with these shoes as well. Every day I look around at people who have great jobs and good money, all because they have a high school diploma or GED. I quit school with only an eighth grade education level. What a bad idea! I was young and didn't care about anything or anybody. It made me mad as hell that these people had nice things and a lot of money. But now I know it was my own fault that I didn't have these things. Back then you couldn't tell me anything.

So, all these years I was mad, and I just knew I wouldn't amount to anything or that I would ever have anything. I guess I was right, or so I thought. I was arrested and put in prison. They gave me 16 years to think about what I had done and what I'm going to do to change that. So, I get here to prison and I see some guys going to school to get their GED and I thought, "Well, now I have time to get me one. Why not?" I had to take a test and got in the class. God knows it wasn't easy, but I'm here. Now I can say I finally grew up and am thinking like a big boy. Now I can get a great job when I get out and work my butt off trying to stay like that. I know it's not easy. It's hard every day I get up when a police officer opens my door. It's a shame someone has to tell me that I can come out of my room, which is an 8x12 foot room. It's no bigger than someone's bathroom, and well, it's also my bathroom. That's a shame. After all that, the officers make us shave and walk in a straight line all the way to class. So it's not easy to get this GED. I ask myself all the time is it worth it, but the guys that teach the class remind me every day how important it really is to get it. So I get up each day and go through it again. I'm going to keep going through it until I have it so that when I do go home I'll have money, a great job and my education, and I'll be able to get another pair of shoes to walk in, and another story to tell.

**Christopher Morris**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

*Every day I wake,  
I remember what kind of  
home I have come from,  
think about where I want to go  
and what steps I will have to take  
today to get to where I need to be.*

**Anonymous, Fairfield County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

What was my struggle to obtain my education? Realistically, I've been through hell and high waters. But during this journey I've learned a lot more. I didn't have too much of a major issue with my ability to learn or obtain my GED. I've dealt with psychological problems in my life to the point where I don't like being around too many people in enclosed areas. I suffer from paranoia amongst other issues.

There were many times when I woke up and prepared for school and then heard that my dorm was locked down due to the Burgundy Team. August 18, 2012, was a wonderful Friday — well at least I thought it was. I just started my first job on the compound in the new chaplain's building, which was still under construction. I assisted in painting and sanding and had the motivation to work myself to a better position. When the job was done I had to leave early to prepare for Jumah (Friday prayer). On the way back to my dorm I had a good feeling I

haven't had in four years, since I was swallowed whole by my own vices. After I prepared for Jumah, I was sitting at the officer's desk. He asked me to get up, and I did. He told me to get my shirt on and reached for my hat. Since I have suffered from paranoia, my natural instincts kicked in, and I blocked his hand from reaching my face. The end result was me going on lock-up for the first time in SCDC, which hurt me deeply.





I had too much to look forward to at that time. I was due to take the final test just a few weeks after. I was due to go to court to fight for my freedom, and I just got my first job. I felt bad, but I had to realize that after every hardship, there's relief. Allah (God) says this in the Quran many times. I felt like giving up many times, but couldn't give up because of my obligations and responsibilities as a father. A father is obligated to provide, guide, love, teach, and lead by example. My daughter Shanavia is six now, and



I strive to uphold my obligations to the best of my ability as a grown man. I'm already serving a 30 year, 85% sentence for voluntary manslaughter and still fighting this unbearable war for freedom. I teach her to never give up and obtain as much as she can educationally. Even her mother is doing the same. We simply strive to raise her to be an intelligent, independent, responsible, loving, nurturing, and strong woman as she meets these hard stages to maturity. We teach her that anything is possible. But in order to reach the impossible, you have to prepare now mentally to fully understand the lessons in life and to apply what you know to be successful in the future.

There are many obstacles we all come across, whether they are lock downs, the Burgundy Team or simply unnecessary altercations with the officers. But it doesn't mean we have to fall subject to by them. We only endure these struggles in life to become stronger mentally, physically and spiritually. These are our God-given tools we use to survive every day. I've learned not to fall victim to ignorance in order to uphold my obligations. You have to fight for what you want and need in life. So overall, what was my struggle to obtain my education? Myself!

**Irshad Muhammad**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **“In My Shoes: My Adult Education Journey”**

Growing up was hard for me. I was surrounded by abuse and neglected by a family that was fragmented. In my heart, I felt unloved and seethed with deep hatred. I was unhappy and depressed all the time. When I was fifteen years old, I refused to obey my parents anymore. I ran away from home and dropped out of



school without a good reason. Then I started hanging out with older guys because I was looking for someone to be a role model in my life. Unfortunately, the people who gave me the most attention were drug dealers and gangs. I started committing robberies and fell into substance abuse. I ended up homeless. Then one day everything changed for the worst in my life. A friend and I were high on cocaine and decided to rob a store. We were

caught as we came out of the store. I took responsibility for my actions and admitted what I did was wrong.

Looking back now, I see that most of my problems were “in me” not “out there.” While in prison I learned that my wounds required a spiritual solution that only God can give. I started growing in my relationship with God by praying, reading my Bible and sharing what I learned with others. I was only one out of many men in prison who faced loneliness, abandonment and betrayal.

All my life I have been searching for the wrong things. Now I’m in school working hard to get my G.E.D. It’s been hard for me because I neglected my education at an early age, but I’m not going to give up. Being in school has taught me a lot. I know there are so many positive things to look forward to if a person is willing to let go of the negative and embrace the positive. The obstacles that I’ve faced in my past have made me a stronger more determined person with a chance for a positive future. I have gained a degree of wisdom from the trials of prison that otherwise never would have been there.

I'm more patient and my values and morals are no longer superficial. I learned that I must not lose sight of what is ahead of me. When there was no vision of a positive future, I could have reverted back to my old ways and never gained from my knowledge. Life is a journey and everything about it is a learning process. But without forward movement and progress, it leads to a dead end. I know I need to have something to reach for in life, not just reaching toward that which is unknown, but reaching toward a goal and a purpose that was set for me - step by step - here a little, there a little. I know now faith can move mountains of doubt. This has been demonstrated to me physically, mentally and spiritually.

My journey has given me strength and kept me mindful of the next man who enters these doors. Hopefully, I can help his shoes stay cleaner than mine.

**Cornell Simpson**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes ... My Adult Education Journey**

I am Lakeashia Simpson, and I am currently serving ten years at Leath Correctional Institution. I dropped out of high-school at the age of sixteen and later arrived at prison at 23 years old. As I began serving my time in April of 2009 I began wanting my GED. There was nothing else for me to do except learn new things. It has been four years since I enrolled in school. But when I first started I had very little education. Math was a weak subject for me and writing was my strongest. Now that I have time to sit down and understand what I am learning, math has become my number one subject!



Over the course of my time here I have worked so hard to attain my adult education. Yes, it is true, I have struggled in my journey and yet I am still determined to get my education while learning new things every day. Back when I was on the streets my pride would not allow me to ask for help from teachers. Since then, I have learned to put my pride aside and ask for help. I have two loving teachers that break things down so I can understand them, and they believe in helping me and the other students with our journey in adult education.

I will leave and take what I have learned in order to help someone else, and they will know what it is like to walk in my shoes. When they are done, they will be able to walk in their own shoes. But my work here is not done. This upcoming year will be the end of my journey smiling, big and free.

**Lakeashia Simpson  
Palmetto Unified School District**

*Looking back now, I see that most of my  
problems were “in me” not “out there.”*

**Cornell Simpson, Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**



There are many journeys in life and not all are the same. Some are more personal and harder traveled than the rest. My adult education journey has not been an easy one. As I become older, it becomes harder to grasp the concepts. The learning process is not a new one but it is a new one all in the same. Come take a walk with me on my adult educational journey.

My adult educational journey has been a struggle for me. Trying to relearn the studies I learned as a child has been difficult. My mind is not as sharp as it once was coming up. Some of the concepts in the class come back easier than others. By me not paying attention in class when I was a juvenile has affected me as an adult. Most of the time I have seen the problem and cannot work it, or do not even know the process to begin to answer the question. Being the individual I was I was ashamed to ask for help. Now that I have matured, I feel no certain way about asking for help from my peers that may be able to help or from the teacher. My journey goes farther than that though. You also have the people that love to oppress you along the way. Being older than the average student, you have the younger students making fun of you, or telling you “you can’t do it.” Then you have the peers my age that also try to tell you “what you doing going to school and you almost thirty?” To some that would be a reason to quit. For me it was motivation to push on. Many think because I have become incarcerated that my learning process has ended, but it has just begun. I have achieved so many goals I never thought were possible. Just being back in school, taking my Work Keys test and being able to be able to take my GED is an accomplishment for me. So it may have been a rough journey, but it was my journey and one well-traveled.

So do you understand the process of my educational journey? The struggles I have been through. It's easy to say I'm going to do it but doing it is a different story. Therefore, the world and my peers can say what they want about me and my education, but my journey I feel is like no other. Therefore, until you have taken a walk in my shoes you can never understand my journey.

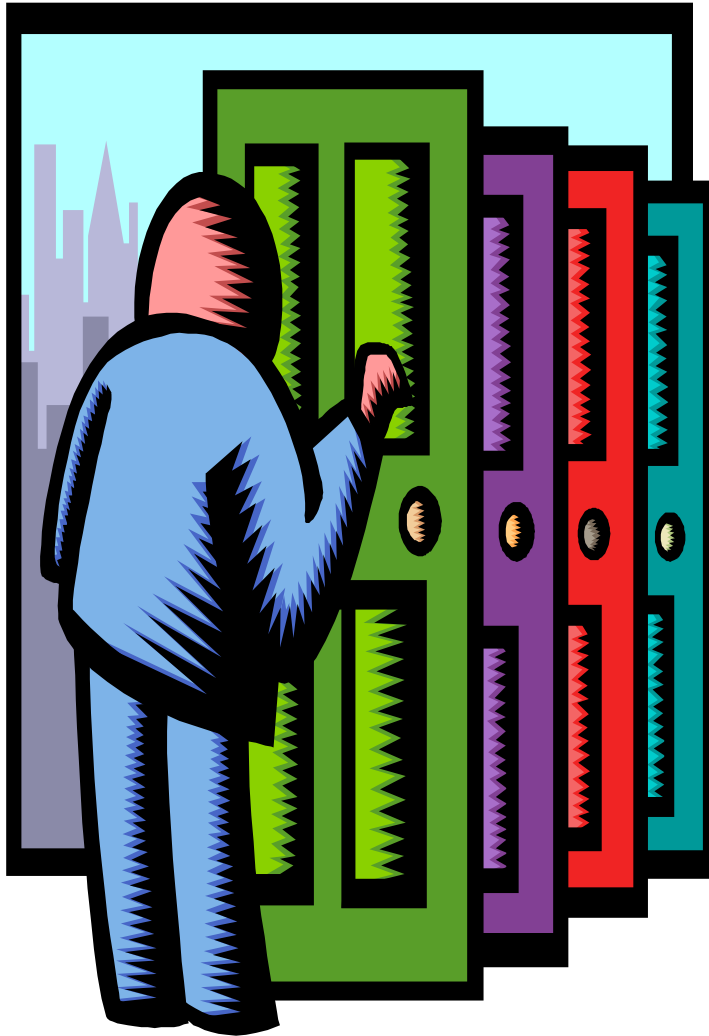
**Ernest Small**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

My adult education journey actually began before the legal age of adulthood. At a very young age I was deprived of access to normal public schooling due to my poverty and living conditions. Adult education has worked wonders on my life, and it will do the same for everyone only if that person wants it. If those of you without an education knew just how difficult it would be to progress in life without it, you'd do whatever it takes to get an education. During my journey for adult education many doors in life that would've otherwise been closed are now open. In fact, the teachers and tutors gave their time, skill and patience to my education, and for them I am grateful.

The many doors of opportunity that I have at my disposal are overwhelming. First of all, I never thought I would be the type to go to college, much less graduate from any educational institution. With my GED I am able to pursue a higher education in whatever I desire. I am now able to provide my family with a more comfortable lifestyle, but more importantly I am able to be a role model for my daughters and other young people like them.





My teachers and tutors were a very valuable asset to my adult education journey. They provided me with that one-on-one time so many of us desperately need in one subject or another until I was comfortable enough to work on my own. There were times when I wanted to just throw in the towel because things had gotten difficult. The love of my teachers steered me back on the right track every time. Their will to teach sparked my will to learn, but ultimately lifted my self-esteem about learning. Those teachers gave me priceless life tools and filled me full of morals, principles and values that I now use in my everyday living.

In conclusion, despite my lengthy incarceration, my adult education journey has been one to remember and always cherish. With all the benefits associated with the completion of some form of education it's very hard to understand why anyone would not want an education. My adult education didn't start in prison, but I completed it there and for that I am humbly grateful.

**Tyrone D. Tisdale**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

There has really been a long unnecessary journey in my educational chase. The process of time has seemed to be a real burden on me. Through the time process I have to put in hours with the class. Also, the time I'm putting in prison led me to taking the test now.



Before I became an inmate of the state, I was attending GED classes at my local adult education center at home. I've been mentally ready for the test for the longest. My only dilemma was having to put in one hundred plus something hours in class before they allowed me to take the test, even though all my pretests always showed I was ready to test.

Now I have to go through the time process while doing time. Not only was I two weeks away from taking my GED test before I got locked-up, but now I'm sitting in a prison class having to restart the GED process all over again. Though the class helps me get my mind right at times, it's still aggravating.

When my educational journey is over, all the time I applied will override anything else it took to gain my education. Having to sacrifice hours after hours of time to gain something, even when it's beneficial to me can be burdensome. But when it's all said and done, I feel real privileged in gaining my education.

**Tobias Turner**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes**

Growing up I was never motivated to do well in school, or to push myself so that I could get accepted into a good college. Rather, I was more concerned with making fast money easily. I did not have the time or the patience to put in the hard work and dedication that it takes to get an education, in hopes that one day I would get a good job.

I got arrested at the age of seventeen, halfway through my senior year of high school. With the charges that I had, I knew I would not be out in time to graduate. But I had come too far along just to throw away twelve years of dredging through school. So, while incarcerated, I decided to get my GED.

At first I did not think that I could do it. But with the constant help and encouragement of my teachers and the principal I persevered and ended up with the highest score in my class. It was my greatest accomplishment up to that point. I was ecstatic and my family, especially my father, was so proud of me. For the first time I actually believed that I could do something positive with my life.

Since then, while incarcerated, I have completed Vocational Carpentry School, graduated college with an Associates of Arts Degree, and I just recently earned my Career Readiness Certificate at the Gold level. All of my drive and eagerness to further my education and the success that has resulted from it began with getting my GED. I now realize that having an education is one of the main ingredients to a successful life on the outside. Therefore, I will continue to utilize the remainder of my time here to learn, grow and build a foundation for the rest of my life by educating myself.

**Jeff Walker**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes - My Adult Educational Journey**

Being raised in the home of a single parent has had its disadvantages. Financial difficulties have played a major role when it came to education and money. Having to refrain from school, to work and help provide, when in actuality education brings forth great wealth. In spite of what I was not able to accomplish in my past, it does not mean a stumbling block cannot be made a stepping stone. Unless one has been given a vision or dream, life would be without purpose. As education requires no age limits, so it is with dreams and visions.

I refuse to allow down fall or remain a within my life, keeping a reality! Some of the to power from their mind believes, the body



set-backs to become my stumbling block of offense my dreams from becoming greatest people have risen downfalls in life. What the becomes. In life, on the

road to recovery, there would be many set-backs as well as obstacles and other offenses to detour our success to accomplishment. Yet, it is up to the individual to overcome or become overcome by, when on the journey to success. At the beginning of my journey, I could not read well, nor do basic mathematics. Yet I have now successfully, by the Grace of God, accomplished passing my Pre-GED test and soon to accomplish my GED test due to determination and perseverance.

In conclusion, our futures begin where life fails us. There should not become a reason why nothing or no one should keep us from becoming the individuals we were created to be. The only one who's keeping our purpose from out-weighting our trials is us. We see problems with the way companies place stipulations on job applications for hiring, yet we fail to even attempt to reach those goals needed for success. How we see ourselves is how others accept us in life.

**Maurice Williams**  
**Palmetto Unified School District**

*I'm planning for the future because  
education is a never ending cycle.  
The more I tutor the more I learn,  
and that's real adult education.*

**Caesar Covington, Palmetto Unified School District**



## **In My Shoes**

### **My Adult Education Journey**

Welcome to a “mile in my shoes.” In my shoes you will take lots of steps in different directions, so hang on and come along. My life is full of activity and responsibility, both at home and school. When I am at the beach, for example, it’s a little different for me than it is for others. As the waves roll and break, you will find me standing and watching: no swimming for me. One of my fears is water, and that is why I will be observing and not participating.

If you were in my shoes at the fair you would be standing alongside the rides watching others. I do not ride the rides myself, it’s just not for me. Another one of my fears is heights. I feel very uncomfortable unless my feet are on “terra firma.”

In my shoes at home we do lots of cooking and baking.. I enjoy making all kinds of different dishes and then watching the family enjoy them. One of my most loved meals is spaghetti. My children rave over that meal!

In my shoes you will find happiness, fulfillment and thankfulness. I am thankful to have had the opportunities that I have had to go to the beach or to enjoy the fair, but even more than this I am happy to have a family that is supportive because I have sixteen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Raising three of my grandchildren keeps me busy, but at the same time, it is very fulfilling. I, too, am thankful for the chance to come to school and to be able to get a fresh start on my education. I hope to get my GED in spite of the many responsibilities I have “in my shoes.”

**Susan Chapman**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**

*I knew then that in order for my life to  
change, I had to change.*

**Caesar Covington, Palmetto Unified School District**

## **In My Shoes My Adult Education Journey**

My name is Marie, and I'm from Haiti. Haiti is a small country in the Caribbean that is an island nation. The Dominican Republic and Haiti share the same space on the island with Haiti occupying the western half. Haiti and the Dominican Republic have not always gotten along, but now they do. The thing I miss most about Haiti is my family and friends. My goal in adult education is to be able to get a better job that will lead to a brighter future.

My family means so much to me. I have four sisters and one brother. Some of them live in Haiti and some of them live in the United States. This is difficult for me. The reason living here is so difficult is because I'm without some of my sisters. I spend a lot of time thinking about what they are doing and whether or not they have enough to eat. I hope one day that we can be together here in the United States.

When I was a child I didn't know what being a Christian meant. I was just following my parent's example. But when I started growing up I wanted to follow Jesus for the rest of my life. When I was sixteen years old I decided to give my life to Jesus and stay with him forever. Now I'm a part of the praise team at the church where I'm a member. I sing and play music at my church also. Sometimes I feel like giving up, but I know I should not give up because God never gave up on me. Why should I give up on Him?





When I was two years old my mom passed away, which was a hard thing for me to go through at such an early age. My father told me that she was a good mother. When she married my Daddy, she was nineteen years old, and he was twenty years old. They were married on September 22, 1976, and she passed away on July 27, 1995. She died during child birth when she was 35 years old.

If you were in my shoes you would know what it is like to start over again in a new country. If you were in my shoes you would know what it is like to grow up without your mom. If you were in my shoes you would know the loneliness of not being able to talk to your sisters. But if you were in my shoes you would know the hope of being a Christian and the joy you can have in spite of difficulties. If you were in my shoes you would know how wonderful it is to be loved and adopted by a family. If you were in my shoes you would know how hard it is to learn in a language that is not your first language.

**Marie Gabriel**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes Adult Education**

My name is Hannah, and I would like to tell you about myself. I have two brothers and one sister. As a child I was always in and out of the hospital. This caused me to get behind in school. I am currently in Adult Education to get my GED so I can fulfill my dream of becoming a baker.



When I was a baby I was always really sick. The doctors never knew what was wrong with me. The doctor told my mother that I was going to have problems because of a high fever as a baby. I was also put on medication to improve my growth rate. After a year I got tired of taking the medicine.

In elementary school I was put back in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I was then put in a resource class. I hated it because I was in the same grade as my younger brother. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade I dropped out of high school. My parents thought it was best because I never did well in school.



When I get my GED I want to become a baker. After a few years of working in a bakery I hope to own my own bakery. Baking gives me a way to express myself. One skill I know I will have to work on is cake decorating. I'm not really good at that yet.

Now you know me a little better. These are some things that have happened in my life. Dropping out of high school felt so horrible. I didn't want my little brother and sister to think that it was all right to drop out of school. My health is so much better now. I like the feeling I get when people eat my pastries because they enjoy them so much.

**Hannah Johnson  
Pickens County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes**

Being in my shoes is a tough task. If you were in my shoes you would have to strive for perfection. Being in my shoes takes dedication and loyalty. This is what being in my shoes is like. Some of my family and co-workers will vouch that being in my shoes is a challenge.

My children have learned that being in my shoes is hard work. They also have realized you have to respect others and be strong-willed. Being in my shoes you have to listen, pay attention and care about what you do. My children have come to understand that persistence is an important part of life and that it is important to finish well.

Being in my shoes my children realize it isn't easy. Being in my shoes the career that I tackle everyday means hard work for me and sacrifice for my family. My job consists of sharing the qualities of love and patience. In my shoes I go in earlier than required in order to help the third shift. Being in my shoes gets extra pay for coming in early and the nurses appreciate the extra help.

My co-workers believe that I go overboard when taking care of my patients. Being in my shoes safety is very important as well. My co-workers believe washing my hands between every patient is time consuming, but it keeps you and the patients from spreading germs. They believe that every short cut gets you finished early. However, if you were in my shoes, safety and universal precautions come first.



Being conscientious, helpful, loyal, hardworking, and striving for perfection in everything that I do is who I am. Whether I am working my job, raising my children, or dealing with my co-workers, I show them that I am up for the challenge of life in my shoes. And that's what being in my shoes is like.

**Kim Littles**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**

## In My Shoes

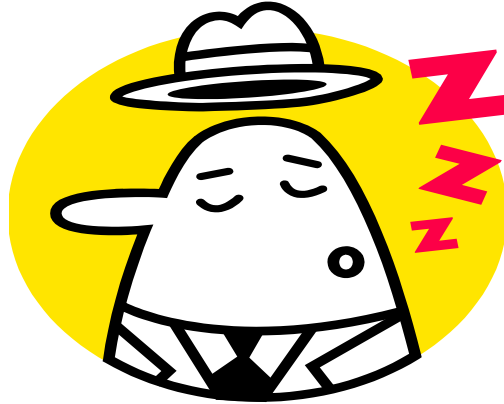
This is how my life is in my shoes. My life revolves around my love for my family, my ability to support my family through work and my efforts to improve my life through continued schooling. There are good times and bad times. I have so much to do and so little time to do it in. If I just had more time in Life, I think my shoes would fit.

In my shoes my love for my family is my “knot.” If it were not for my family I would be in jail or possibly even dead. My children would be the “soul” of the shoe. My oldest child was the best thing that happened to me from the first day she was born. I stopped doing things that I should never have been doing in the first place. My baby girl has taught me a lot of responsibility. This is because Jessie, my baby girl, has been through more than most children. She started out having food allergies to eggs and peanuts when she was three years old. She grew out of the food allergy for eggs and later she also grew out of the food allergy to peanuts. Jessie is now five years old and has been diagnosed with Type I Diabetes. Jessie will never be able to grow out of this disease.

In my shoes, being laid off from work was the hardest thing that has ever happened to me. Not having the money to go to the doctor and not having insurance caused everyone to advise me to get my children on Medicaid. In my shoes I felt like I was at a loss for what to do to help my family. I had no job, no money and with the children there seemed to be no end to all the problems. Now at least we have Medicaid, and I have a job, and I’m going to school.



In an attempt to improve my situation I've been in school for over a year now. I have taken the Work Keys tests and have been awarded a Silver Career Readiness certificate. I have been taught by the greatest teachers that I've ever had. I have learned a lot of new material that I was never taught in school! Returning to school as an adult means shifting priorities and making good use of what valuable time you have. Working a third shift job and going to school takes a lot out of you. Sorry if you catch me snoring because many days when I come to school I am "dog tired." I am coming to school to be a good example for my girls and to show them that they need to stay in school. So if you were in my shoes you would know that my children mean everything to me.

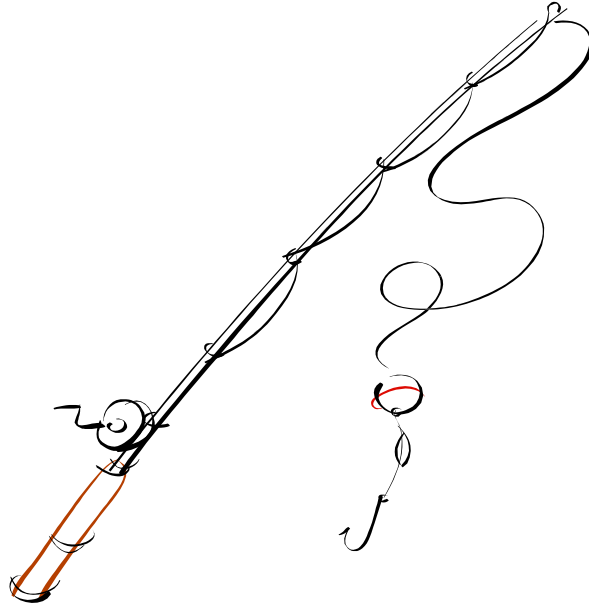


If you were in my shoes you would see how hard it is to be a husband, a father and a student. It is hard to find the time to do all that I need to do in a day. At the end of the day I often ask myself, "Where did the day go?" There is not much time to think about where the day has gone or where I have been. Going to school on Mondays is the hardest thing for me to do because I have not slept nor have I even made it home. I pick my girls up to take them to school just to spend time with them. Just a car ride with them is all I need to make me happy. So if you were in my shoes you would find an old worn out pair of shoes with a good soul and a strong knot.

**George Medlin**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**

## **In My Shoes My Adult Education Journey**

Someone in my shoes has learned the virtues of patience and understanding. You don't get to be my age without learning a few things. Age brings with it a degree of wisdom that is best expressed through loving others. I am a man who loves the outdoors and am no stranger to a fishing pole or a deer stand. The only problem is that lately I don't seem to have the time to do all that I want to do.



My family is very important to me. We have many wonderful traditions. One tradition that we have is observing the Thanksgiving holidays together. Our family enjoys having turkey and dressing and all the fixings for Thanksgiving. Traditionally, one of my brothers would help my mother in the kitchen while the other brothers and I would take the dogs for a hunt. These memories are special to me, but as time goes on we have lost some family members. Because of that, now holidays are a mixture of happiness and sadness.

When I was young I was just like so many young people who thought that an education was not important. When I started looking for work I latched on to the first thing I came upon which happened to be textiles. The first job I ever had was at Dan River Textiles in Liberty, SC. It was a good job at the time but as foreign competition made it difficult for American companies, gradually textile jobs become more and more difficult to find. Many textile companies moved overseas when they found out that laborers in other countries would work for a smaller wage. The reason I am trying to get my G.E.D. is because I realize the key to today's jobs is education and retraining.

My faith is why I believe in God and in going to church and trying to live right. I also believe that you should treat others as you would like to be treated. This is the way that my family taught us at home. When life gets tough, as it often does, my faith helps sustain me.

I have learned a lot about getting a G.E.D. It is not an easy thing to do. It is like so many other things in life that are not easy things to do. Helping family members and friends through difficulties is an example of something that is not always easy. All we can do is ask God to help us through it all. Tough times don't last, but tough people do.

**John Pilgrim**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**



## In My Shoes

In my shoes, there are many emotions pulling at me. First of all, I am someone who tends to bury their feelings deep inside. Because of this, it's not easy to filter through my emotions. I think being pregnant has made it easier to forget about myself and to think about what's really important in life.

If you were in my shoes, you would know what it felt like to be pregnant. You would know the feeling of having a tiny baby moving inside you. You would also know the feeling of having a tiny life depending on you and the decisions you make. But most important, you would know how it felt to love someone so much even before you met them face to face. There is no better feeling than becoming a parent.



If you were in my shoes you would know what it feels like to hide your emotions. You would know how it feels to be hurt so many times to the point where you just shut everyone and everything out of your life. You would also know how it hurts to feel like you had to hide your emotions so that no one can even tell there is something wrong. But you would also know how it feels to be alone and hopeless, but too scared to tell anyone for fear that they will make fun of you.



If you were in my shoes you would know what it feels like to be in love. The feeling of finding that one special person that you know you want to spend the rest of your life with. It's a great feeling to know you can be yourself and not have to hide anything from the one you love. You don't have to worry about being judged or made fun of because you trust them to love you no matter what. Personally, I think being in love is one of the greatest feelings anyone could ever experience in their lives.

In my shoes there is still a lot I have to learn. I have to learn how to raise a child, how to express my emotions and how to deal with what life throws at me. If you were me, I guarantee you wouldn't know what to do in my shoes. But by coming to the Adult Learning Center I hope to get my GED in order to be able to provide for my family and myself. Every parent needs a livelihood that will help them take care of themselves and their family.

**Ashley Rose**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**



## **In My Shoes My Adult Education Journey**



Hello my name is Maria Sanchez. I was born in Mexico and raised in the United States. I studied elementary and middle school in California. Then I moved to the state of Mississippi where I attended high school.

When I was a junior in high school I was so excited that I had one year left in school. In that time I found out that I was pregnant. Being pregnant was something that I did not plan. It was not easy for me, but I had to make the best of it. After all, having a child is a great blessing. During my pregnancy I encountered many obstacles: morning sickness, headaches, doctor's appointments, etc., causing me to be late and even miss school days. This of course affected the number credits earned my junior year.

The following school year the school counselor told me that I had to repeat my junior year because I had missed so many days. This made me very upset. I had very good grades but that didn't matter to them. According to the school system my grades didn't matter. What mattered were the credits I received, and since I missed so many days of school I had not earned enough credits. That meant I didn't have one year but two years left in school.

At that point I was 18 years old and my daughter was born. So I had to make a decision: either stay in school for two more years or quit school. Of course at that point the easy way out was to quit school, so I did. I decided to be a full-time mother. The following year we moved to the state of South Carolina.

At the age of 21 I enrolled in a GED program at Simpson Academy. It didn't really work out for me since I had to pay for the program, and I also had to pay daycare for my daughter. Having to pay for daycare was very expensive so I decided to quit the program. When I informed the school principal the reasons I was quitting she then told me of the Parent Education Program (PEP) at the Adult Learning Center.

It wasn't until 2007 that I started this program. This program was and is a great blessing to me. It offered me free transportation, free child care and free meals for me and my daughter. Attending everyday helped me prepare for my GED test. In 2008 I was ready to take my final test, not knowing that I needed to have a state issued identification would prevent me from taking my GED test. Throughout all my life I have encountered many roadblocks. However, this one I can say was the biggest one.

Many people don't know that a great population of Hispanics don't have an identification card or a driver's license. I lived all my life in the United States and didn't realize I needed this. To get an identification card you are required to have a social security number. People born outside the United States don't have a social security number. This makes living in the United States difficult to the Hispanic population.



A very special person in my life, Mrs. Cheryl, asked me a question, "Maria what are you planning to do? Are you going to let this stop you?" I for sure did not know what to do. At that time I was struggling financially so I couldn't hire a lawyer to fix my legal status in the United States. Mrs. Cheryl was a blessing in my life. She offered to pay for my lawyer. At that time there was nothing we could do. Sadly, for the third time, I had to quit school again. Before I left the program Mrs. Cheryl, our director, told me "If there is anything I can do for you in the future, let me know."

It wasn't until June 15, 2012 that President Obama signed a memo calling for deferred action for certain undocumented young people who came to the United States as children and have pursued education. This gave me hope to pursue my dream. After four years of waiting I could finally come back to school and finish my GED.

On August 2012 I returned to the Parent Education Program. I was so nervous yet excited to have the opportunity to return to school. All the staff from this program is very dear to me, but there are two very special people. This first is Mrs. Cheryl because she opened the doors to this program and always supported me no matter the circumstance. She is a great blessing in my life. The other person is Mrs. Wendy because she is not only my teacher but a great friend who I appreciate. I appreciate her because of all the support she gives me inside and out of the classroom and for never giving up on me.

In February 2013 I took my National Career Readiness Certificate test and earned a Silver level. I was so happy. This was one step closer to accomplishing my goal. Now I had to work harder to take the GED test before the new test started in January. When I returned to school this school year I was determined to get my GED.

In November 2013 I took my GED. I was so nervous, but I knew everything was going to be okay. Taking the GED test was very stressful, but at the end of the day, I was going to receive my test scores. Successfully I passed four of the five tests, but I had to wait three to four days to receive my writing score. Waiting for that score made me feel so many emotions: anxiety, nervousness and excitement. Finally my tests score arrived, and I am proud to say that I successfully achieved my goal. I passed my GED tests.

Going home with this amazing news made my family very proud. My mother even bought me a cake to celebrate my success. Sunday morning I received many compliments from my church family. This made me feel very special.

Now that I have accomplished my GED I anticipate applying for a job while I achieve my certification as a professional interpreter. Being an interpreter, I can utilize my interpersonal and translating skills to help others in need.

To conclude, I want to say as long as we persevere we can always succeed. It doesn't matter what situation you are going through, you should never give up on your dreams. If we persevere anything is possible. I want to thank God for being with me since the beginning of my journey to the end and for giving me strength in my moments of weakness. There is a verse in the Bible that says, "I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me," and I strongly believe in it. Once again I want to thank God, my family and every single person who has encouraged and supported me in my journey.

**Maria Sanchez**  
**Pickens County Adult Education**



*My journey has given me strength and  
kept me mindful of the next man who  
enters these doors. Hopefully, I can help  
his shoes stay cleaner than mine.*

**Cornell Simpson, Palmetto Unified School District**

*I have sixteen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Raising three of my grandchildren keeps me busy, but at the same time, it is very fulfilling. I, too, am thankful for the chance to come to school and to be able to get a fresh start on my education. I hope to get my GED in spite of the many responsibilities I have “in my shoes.”*

**Susan Chapman, Pickens County Adult Education**

# Reflections – Office of Adult Education Staff

*South Carolina's adult education family strives to provide adults with educational opportunities to acquire and improve their literacy skills necessary to be self-sufficient and to participate effectively as productive workers, family members, and citizens. Whether participating in a Family Literacy program, English-As-A-Second Language program, high school equivalency preparation program, WorkKeys preparation program, or anything else in between, South Carolina's adult education programs have dedicated instructors and support staff who are there to help. This publication is just a glimpse at some of the outcomes possible.*

Dr. David Stout, Director of Adult Education

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*"The secret of getting ahead is getting started." Mark Twain*

Jennifer Cooper-Keels, Education Associate

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*These stories are like a tapestry of our culture painted with the struggles of our people and with their triumphs, strengthening our faith that Adult Education can truly help make a difference.*

Tonya Creamer, Education Associate

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*One purpose of education is to provide everyone with the opportunity to learn how best he/she may serve the world, country, state, community and the family. It takes tremendous courage to leave the education arena, return to it and excel against all odds. These stories are examples of courage and triumph. What amazing examples of unlimited service potential.*

Harriette Jenerette, Education Associate

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*“We learn by pushing ourselves and finding what really lies at the outer reaches of our abilities.” Josh Waitzkin*

Mike King, Education Associate

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*In his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama said, “Here in America our success should depend not on accident of birth, but the strength of our work ethic and the scope of our dreams. That’s what drew our forebears here . . . Opportunity is who we are.”*

*With the publication of this special anthology, we happily celebrate those who have chosen the opportunity to improve their lives through education. Their successes are a tribute to the adult educators who have worked so diligently with them to make the magic happen.*

Terry Phillips, Education Associate

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*I’m very impressed and in awe of these students,  
who despite some horrible circumstances,  
found a way to persevere and work hard to get their GED.  
Way to go!*

Rhonda Raven, Administrative Assistant

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*“Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.” Gail Devers*

*All of you gave education a second try and look at  
what you have accomplished! Way to go!!*

Roxanne Sims, Administrative Assistant

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*Walt Disney said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” That is the message we want all adult education students to believe and receive.*

*With the assistance of our adult education practitioners, these students published in this book have realized one of their dreams, to improve their education. We applaud each of you and wish you God’s speed in all of your future endeavors. Never stop dreaming!*

Janet K. Thompson, Education Associate

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# **ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTORY**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Phone No.</b>
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Anderson 3, 4, 5	Richard Gaines	864-260-5075
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Beaufort	Juanita Murrell	843-322-0780
Berkeley	Lillie Caldwell	843-899-8703
Charleston	Susan Friedrich	843-746-6445
Cherokee	Lisa Hannon	864-206-6993
Chester	Karen Kerr	803-581-9324
Chesterfield	Connie Townsend	843-623-2204
Clarendon	Julie Griffin	803-473-2531
Colleton	Lynn Jones	843-782-0018
Darlington	Chuck Miller	843-398-2856
Dillon	Brooksie Singleton	843-774-1218
Dorchester	Julie Anne Kornahrens	843-873-7372
Edgefield	Vickie Butler	803-275-4158
Fairfield	Lanisha Tindal	803-635-4859
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Florence 2, 3	Mark Evans	843-374-5517
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Georgetown	Jim Ferdon	843-546-0219
Greenville	Chuck Welch	864-355-6085
Greenville Literacy Association, Inc.	Carol Browning	864-467-3556
Greenwood	Doris Watson	864-941-5449

<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Director</u></b>	<b><u>Phone No.</u></b>
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Horry	Virginia Simmons	843-488-6200
Kershaw	Weyland Burns	803-425-8980
Lancaster	Kim Linton	803-416-8902
Laurens	Joe Makla/Anita Wilson	864-938-1524
Lee	Eloise Witherspoon	803-484-4040
Lexington 1	Myles Newman	803-821-2950
Lexington 2, 4	Christy Henderson	803-739-4185
Lexington 3	Frances Bouknight	803-532-1742
Lexington 5	Kathie Greer	803-476-8229
Marion	Candyce Brooks	843-423-2591
Marlboro	Herbert Gould	843-479-5923
McCormick	Rodney Robinson	864-443-0051
Newberry	David Green	803-321-2112
Oconee	Gene Williams	864-886-4429
Orangeburg/Calhoun	Renee Ritter	803-268-2533
Palmetto Unified	Fran Bouknight	803-896-1548
Pickens	Mary Gaston	864-397-3825
Richland 1	Marva Coates	803-343-2939
Richland 2	Bobby Cunningham	803-736-8787
Rock Hill 3	Sandy Andrews	803-981-1375
Saluda	Jimmy Crawford	864-445-3346
Spartanburg	Tammy Cooley	864-594-4428
Sumter	Sharon Teigue	803-778-6432
Trident Literacy	Eileen Chepenik	843-747-2223
Tri-District	Kenneth N’Gai Gaither	803-810-8443
Union	Eric Childers	864-429-1770
Williamsburg	Fred Moore	843-355-6887

*In my shoes I had to rediscover my  
purpose and recycle my life.*

**Brenda Bobo, Anderson District 5 Adult Education**

# **Annual Theme**

Each year an Adult Education Program submits the theme for National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week.

## **2012-2013 Theme**

**“The Family That Reads Together, Succeeds Together”**

Submitted by Marlboro Adult Education Program  
Herbert Gould, Director

## **2013-2014 Theme**

**“In My Shoes”**

Submitted by Fairfield Adult Education Program  
Nathaniel Bryant, Former Director  
Lanisha Tindal, Current Director

